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CHINA IN ASEAN-LED
MULTILATERAL FORUMS

Serene Hung

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Serene Hung*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACFTA	ASEAN-China Free Trade Agreement
ACMM	ASEAN-China Ministerial Meeting
ACSOM	ASEAN-China Senior Officials' Meeting
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
APO	ASEAN Plus One
APT	ASEAN Plus Three
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CANCHIS	Canada-China Seminar on Asia-Pacific Multilateralism and Cooperative Security
CASS	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
CBM	Confidence Building Measure
CICIR	China Institute of Contemporary International Relations
COC	Code of Conduct
DCOC	Declaration on Code of Conduct
CLMV	Cambodia Laos Myanmar Vietnam
EAC	East Asia Community
EAS	East Asia Summit
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
IAPS	Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies
IISS	Institute of International Strategic Studies
ISG	Intersessional Support Group
ISM	Intersessional Meeting
MFN	Most-Favored Nation
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NSC	New Security Concept
PD	Preventative Diplomacy
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
PMC	Post-Ministerial Conference
PRC	People's Republic of China
PSI	Proliferation Security Initiative
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SCS	South China Sea
SD	Shangri-la Dialogue
SPC	Security Policy Conference
TAC	Treaty of Amity and Cooperation
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention of Law of the Seas
VFA	Visiting Forces Agreement
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

I. A Changed Attitude toward Regional Multilateralism

In both rhetoric and action, China is arguably one of East Asia's most enthusiastic supporters of regional cooperation. China is an active participant, and sometimes even leader, of every significant regional economic and security forum for which it qualifies. These include the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), ASEAN Plus Three (APT), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the North Korea Six-Party Talks, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and the Boao Forum for Asia, among others. It is the only country that has meaningful security involvement in the four main regions of the Asia-Pacific: Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia and Central Asia. It has peacefully resolved all of its land border disputes—often after significant compromises—save one with India, with which it is currently negotiating.¹ In its approach toward regional multilateralism, China is self-assured, constructive, and forward-looking.

If the history of the People's Republic of China (PRC) is anything to go by however, China's enthusiastic involvement in regional multilateral forums is truly astonishing. China hardly had a coherent regional strategy before the mid-1990s. So intent was China in balancing between global powers during the Cold War that writing in 1984, Levine observed:

Although much, if not most, of China's foreign policy is focused on Asia, at the conceptual level the Chinese rarely think in regional terms at all. Chinese leaders approach their relations with their neighbors either on a purely bilateral basis, or else with reference to a set of global policies that they attempt to apply to all countries in a universalistic fashion. . . . To a significant degree, China has been a regional power without a regional policy.²

1. David Shambaugh, "China Engages Asia," *International Security*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Winter 2004/05), p. 66. See also M. Taylor Fravel, "Regime Insecurity and International Cooperation, Explaining China's Compromises in Territorial Disputes," *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Fall 2005).

2. Steven I. Levine, "China in Asia: the PRC as a Regional Power," in Harry Harding, ed., *China's Foreign Relations in the 1980s* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 107.

The end of the Cold War did not dispel the paradox that Levine identified: China continued to view regional organizations with much suspicion, fearful that they were tools of the U.S. that could be used to criticize and contain it. But around 1996/1997, China's attitude towards regional multilateralism changed: it began to actively participate in forums such as the ARF. Today, its diplomats fan out to virtually every single multilateral meeting in the region.³ A comparison of the number of multilateral mechanisms China has established with ASEAN with that of Japan, India, and the U.S. is instructive in highlighting the high degree of activism on Beijing's part: there have been 27 ASEAN-China mechanisms established over a period of ten years since dialogue relations were formalized in 1996; 33 ASEAN-Japan mechanisms since dialogue relations were formalized in 1977; 14 ASEAN-India mechanisms since dialogue relations were formalized in 1995; and just seven ASEAN-U.S. bodies since the establishment of relations in 1997.⁴ Graph 1.1 shows that since the mid-1990s there has been increasing interest in concepts such as multilateralism and cooperative security in academic circles, which, in China, is arguably a reflection of policy-making circles.

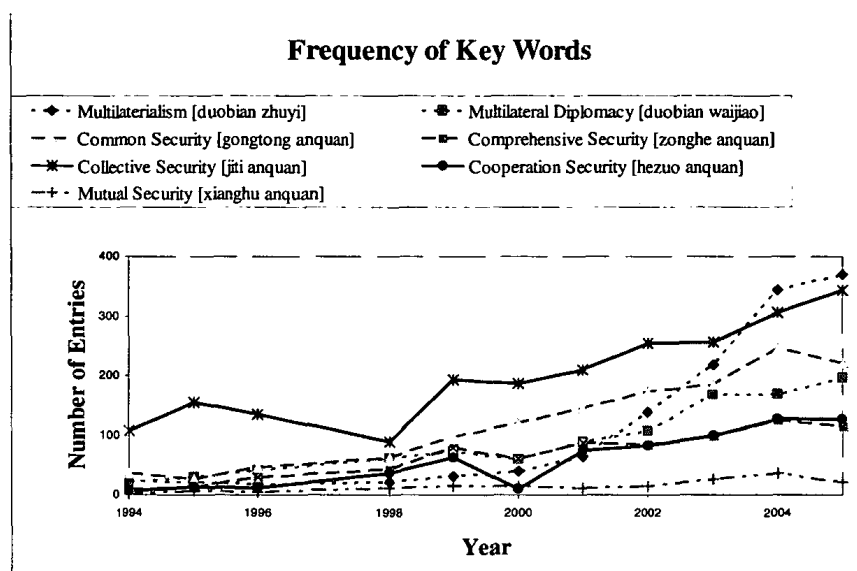
China's willing embrace of responsible engagement of its neighbors is remarkable not only because it has occurred so quickly, but also because it is a dramatic departure from China's traditionally absolutist, sovereignty-bound worldview, if not victim mentality. The discourse that China now promotes of itself—a responsible Great Power [*daguo*] which vigorously upholds regional and global institutions that limit state sovereignty—seems to be in tension with another Westphalian one along the lines of China being a victim of hegemonic powers in an anarchic world where relative power and sovereignty matter.⁵ China's cooperative behavior is also interesting because it cuts against theoretical predictions about how rising states will act. Why is China seeking to reassure other states at a time when it is increasingly powerful? Why should China feel compelled to reassure other states, since increasing economic interdependence ought to remove security dilemmas?

3. Interview with Southeast Asian MOFA official, March 2006.

4. See Appendix: ASEAN-China, ASEAN-Japan, ASEAN-India and ASEAN-U.S. Mechanisms, p. 97.

5. Alastair Iain Johnston, "Legitimacy, Foreign Policy and the Sources of Realpolitik," November 1999, p. 22. Available at <http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~johnston/legitimacy.pdf>.

Graph 1.1: Annual Frequency of Key Words Related to Multilateralism and Security Cooperation in International Relations Journals from China⁶



II. The Thesis Question

This article examines China's participation in ASEAN-led regional forums, and seeks to explain the motivations for the dramatic shift in China's attitude towards regional multilateralism in the mid-1990s, as well as the reasons for China's continued interest in it. Identifying the factors driving China's multilateral policy at any one time has important policy implications, because different motivations will necessitate different policy prescriptions. For example, if China's interest in regional cooperation is driven by a hegemonic desire to form anti-U.S. coalitions and extrude the U.S. out of Asia, the U.S. may seek to implement a containment policy and strategize on ways to use coercion or brute force. If however, China's interest has been a result of a gradual process of internal-

6. The counts were obtained from key word searches in international relations and political science journals located in the China Academic Journals (CAJ) database. Data for 1997 was unobtainable. There is a fall in the frequency of a number of key words for 2005. This is probably because some journal articles have not been entered into the database yet—the CAJ database has a rather long lag-time for a number of journals. My thanks to Martin Heijdra for patiently teaching me the intricacies of the CAJ database.

izing cooperative norms from ASEAN, the U.S. will have an interest in implementing an engagement policy.⁷

III. Why ASEAN-led Forums?

ASEAN, or the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, is an organization that operates on the “ASEAN Way”: diplomatic norms of gradual organizational evolution, decision-making based on dialogue and consensus, and respect for sovereignty, equality, and non-interference. “ASEAN-led forums” simply refer to the regional discussion meetings that are initiated by ASEAN and conducted based on the “ASEAN Way.” It does not necessarily indicate that ASEAN is driving the agenda—it only means that ASEAN is leading the meetings in terms of the day-to-day administrative businesses.

This article focuses on ASEAN-led forums primarily because they provide the most conducive conditions for the examination of Beijing’s motivations and preferences in its exercise of multilateral diplomacy. First, the bulk of these forums (including the three forums examined in this article) emerged only from the mid-1990s onwards. Hence China is one of the founding participants of these forums, and had a say in shaping their future from their inception. This stands in contrast to institutions such as the U.N., for which China was a late-comer. Its behavior in the U.N. may therefore not reflect true desires but be the product of being restrained by already-institutionalized rules. The direction in which China tries to take these ASEAN-led forums can reveal much about its leadership’s foreign policy goals. For example, if China boycotts the forums in which the U.S. and its Western allies participate, and throws its weight behind Asian-only forums like the APT, one can surmise that it embraces multilateralism because it wants to extrude the U.S. from the region.⁸

Second, ASEAN’s norms of behavior—born from Southeast Asian states’ anti-colonial, Westphalian conception of sovereignty—are strikingly similar to China’s “Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence.”⁹ By emphasizing principles such as non-

7. These two examples are simply two book-ends of the engagement-containment debate. In reality there are usually mixes of both strategies toward both revisionist and dovish states.

8. This statement is a hypothetical.

9. The Five Principles of Peaceful-Coexistence were first proposed by Premier ZHOU Enlai in 1953 during China’s negotiations with India over Tibet. They include mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, non-in-

interference in the internal affairs of other states, ASEAN-led forums reassure China that its core national interests will not be compromised.¹⁰ Again, one is more likely to observe a state's undisguised intentions when it is participating in forums that allow it to feel relaxed.

Third, material incentives and costs are absent in ASEAN-led forums like the ARF. The removal of such time- and event-specific motivations for cooperation leaves greater room for an examination of more overarching hypotheses, such as the quest for regional hegemony, socialization into norms of cooperative security, etc.

Fourth, ASEAN-led forums provide a good test for socialization. All of the ASEAN-led forums selected here contain what Iain Johnston calls a "counter-realpolitik ideology" that is "diffusible."¹¹ Johnston's seminal writing on the ability of the ARF to socialize a small group of Chinese elites involved in the ARF process is premised on the idea that the "ASEAN Way" has diffusible and persuasive force. So extrapolating from Johnston's argument: if Chinese elites involved in the ARF process can be socialized because of the ARF's embodiment of the "ASEAN Way," then Chinese elites involved in other multilateral mechanisms embodying the "ASEAN Way" should also undergo socialization and show signs of willingness to compromise on issues that were formerly non-negotiable. If Johnston's argument is correct, one should see compromise—or some sort of relaxation—in China's claim of sovereignty over the SCS (SCS) dispute.

IV. Hypotheses/Alternative Explanations

The dependent variable in this study is changes in China's exercise of multilateral diplomacy. "Multilateral diplomacy" however, is a rather vague term. Indicators of change would include increased willingness to engage ASEAN in a multilateral discussion

terference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence.

10. This was not true of the ARF in 1994. Because it was the first time that China was participating in a regional security forum, the Chinese were wary that the relatively small Southeast Asian states would be controlled by the U.S. and therefore have little say in the way discussions would be conducted. However by the late 1990s China was relatively confident that ASEAN, not Washington, drives the agenda in the forums that it establishes.

11. Alastair Iain Johnston, "Socialization in International Institutions: The ASEAN Way and International Relations Theory," in G. John Ikenberry and Michael Mastanduno, eds., *International Relations Theory and the Asia-Pacific* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 123

for a Code of Conduct in the SCS, increasing frequency in the hosting or chairing of ARF Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) meetings, proposing new initiatives such as an ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA), etc.

Five possible explanations for the shift in China's attitude towards multilateralism in 1996/1997, and its continued interest in multilateral diplomacy, are as follows:

1. China is embracing multilateralism because its worldview has been transformed after interacting with, and being socialized by ASEAN.
2. China is embracing multilateralism because it is becoming more economically integrated with the region. Economic integration will lead to economic cooperation, which then segues into political cooperation.
3. China is embracing multilateralism because it sees Southeast Asia as a potential sphere of influence, and hopes to forge anti-U.S. relations to eventually push the U.S. out of the region and establish itself as the region's—if not the globe's—superpower.
4. China is embracing multilateralism because it wants to have a peaceful regional environment conducive to its economic growth.
5. China is embracing multilateralism because it realizes that a mix of bilateral and multilateral diplomacy best suits its interest in maintaining good relations with its neighbors, and ensuring that they are reassured of China's benevolent nature so that they will not be tempted to join the U.S. in an anti-China coalition.

This article will examine the strengths of the above hypotheses by presenting evidence to counter or support them. The next chapter looks at China's multilateral negotiations with ASEAN over the SCS dispute. This study provides a hard test case for Hypothesis 1, a socialization argument usually raised by constructivists who observe ASEAN's engagement efforts, China's increasing participation in ASEAN-related forums, the similarities between the ASEAN Way and China's rhetoric on mutual security, and then proceed to make a causal link between ASEAN engagement and Chinese interest in multilateralism. Since the study involves a sovereignty dispute in which China has little incentive to compromise, proof of China being socialized would be a large accolade for constructivists. However the chapter rejects the hypothesis that China

is being socialized by ASEAN by showing that there is a causal relationship between Chinese interest in multilateral negotiations with ASEAN and changes in regional alliance patterns which are perceived as having the potential to contain China (Hypothesis 5). That is, China's embrace of multilateralism is a tactical strategy of hedging against a serious downturn in U.S.-China relations.

Chapter three examines China's participation in the ARF. It provides evidence to debunk the idea that China is trying to assert regional hegemony and oust the U.S. from Asia (Hypothesis 3). It also argues that Hypothesis 4—an argument most often raised by Chinese analysts who try to explain China's interest in multilateralism as befitting of a country that is benign and peaceful—does not have sufficient explanatory power to account for changes in Beijing's diplomacy. China can forge good neighborly relations by improving bilateral ones; the desire to have good neighborly relations and a peaceful regional environment does not necessitate the depth and breadth of Chinese involvement in multilateral mechanisms, and more specifically, the relatively abrupt change in attitude towards the ARF from late 1996/early 1997. The U.S. for example, is sorely deficient in terms of the number of dialogue mechanisms it has with ASEAN, but it remains the region's most trusted great power.

Like chapter two, chapter three finds that changes in regional alliances prompted China to reassess its aversion to multilateralism. In addition, because the ARF is much broader in scope, it holds that China's interest in multilateral cooperation is not merely confined to a desire to hedge against U.S. containment. China realizes that it needs help from other countries to curb transnational problems such as avian flu, piracy etc, and thus seems to have dissected the concept of sovereignty along functional lines with varying degrees of cooperativeness along those lines. So, for example, China is most willing to discuss economic cooperation, followed by non-traditional security cooperation, and least willing to offer up traditional security issues to multilateral discussions. It further finds indications that positive feedback is occurring: China's belief that it has the ability to shape the regional order increases as it participates in ASEAN-led forums. This confidence fuels its efforts in forwarding multilateralism.

Chapter four then presents two instances—the proposal for an ACFTA and the negotiations over the East Asia Summit (EAS)—in which China actively used multilateral tools to augment its influence in the region. Economic interdependence (Hypotheses 2 and

4) provides necessary, but not sufficient, explanation for China's interest in regional cooperation.

V. China's Strategic Priorities

Before assessing China's multilateral policy, four assumptions about China's strategic priorities are offered:

1. Maintain a stable regional environment for economic development and regime security.
2. Maintain territorial sovereignty and prevent Taiwanese independence.
3. Increase comprehensive national power.
4. Establish an image of being a responsible, peaceful power to reduce anxieties of a threatening China.

These priorities undergird the analysis below.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SOUTH CHINA SEA DISPUTE

I. Explaining Chinese Motivations: Learning or Adaptation?

This chapter seeks to account for China's willingness to conduct multilateral negotiations with ASEAN over the South China Sea (SCS) dispute. Arguably, it is Beijing's reassuring stance that has sharply decreased military tensions and talk of a "China threat" in Southeast Asia compared to those of a decade ago. Hence it is worthwhile to identify the roots of this amicable diplomacy. The arguments explaining this change can be broadly divided into two different sets: learning and adaptation.¹² Learning is a process by which a state undergoes fundamental cognitive change by internalizing new conceptions of its interests and the means of pursuing them. Adaptation on the other hand, is a tactical, instrumental adjustment in strategy as a response to changes in external conditions—the state's worldview and preferences remain the same, only the strategies to achieve those preferences change.

This chapter asks whether the changes in China's attitude towards multilateral discussions with ASEAN are a result of learning, adaptation, or some combination of the two. China's 2002 decision to accede to a Declaration on a Code of Conduct (DCOC) on the SCS has often been attributed to learning arguments, along the lines of Beijing being "socialized" by ASEAN's intensive engagement efforts. The broad idea is that regular interaction and communication between China and ASEAN facilitates mutual understandings, establishes norms or shared standards of expected behavior, and results in a fundamental change in the way China conceives of the SCS dispute and of ASEAN.

By tracing Beijing's discussions with ASEAN from the 1995 Mischief Reef incident to the 2002 ascension to the DCOC, as well as its perception of the strategic realignments taking place around its periphery during this period, this chapter argues that the adaptation argument holds greater weight. It finds that there seems to be a casual link between increasing Chinese anxieties over the possibility of a U.S.-led encirclement campaign against China and the adoption of cooperative, multilateral diplomacy on the SCS dispute.

12. I adopt these terms from Alastair Iain Johnston's study of China's arms control policy. See Alastair Iain Johnston, "Learning versus Adaptation: Explaining Changes in Chinese Arms Control Policy in the 1980s and 1990s," *China Journal*, No. 35 (January 1996).

China's interest in multilateralism increases when it identifies potentially threatening changes in its regional environment, because it hopes that a reputation for self-restraint and good neighborly behavior can hedge against an anti-China coalition. That is, the fear of U.S. encirclement was the main motivation for China's willingness to conduct multilateral negotiations with ASEAN over the SCS dispute. China's seemingly accommodating stance on the SCS dispute reflects tactical adaptation rather than a fundamental change in Beijing's worldview.

This chapter first outlines the method by which it tests the learning and adaptation arguments. It then shows how changes in the region in three periods—1995-1996, 1999-2000, and after September 11—caused China to become more willing to engage in multilateral negotiations with ASEAN. Next it evaluates the significance of the DCOC, and explains why it provides further evidence that China's recent embrace of multilateral mechanisms does not indicate that it intends to relax its claims of sovereignty over the SCS and is hence tactical in nature.

II. Testing the Hypotheses

How might one test for the strength of learning and adaptation arguments in China's multilateral engagement of ASEAN over the SCS problem? The dependent variable in this study is changes in the degree of Chinese cooperativeness with ASEAN, indicated by two measures: the extent to which China is willing to engage in multilateral negotiations with ASEAN on the SCS—negotiations which it has previously been opposed to, and the level of Chinese encroachment into disputed areas, such as upgrading structures on reefs and drilling in disputed waters. The latter is important even though it does not involve direct interaction between China and ASEAN, because a unilateral pursuit of interests in the area indicates a disregard for the interests of other claimant states, thereby seriously calling into question the sincerity with which China is engaging in multilateral negotiations at the time.

If the learning argument holds water, one should expect a linear advance in the degree of Chinese cooperativeness. There should be an increasing trend because if policy changes are a result of a fundamental cognitive transformation, one should not see policy reversals on decisions to be cooperative. In addition, this increase should be gradual because the process of internalizing norms is a slow one.

If the adaptation argument is accurate however, one should expect Chinese cooperativeness to increase only after changes in the external environment have occurred. In addition, the increases should be sharper and more sudden than those under the learning argument. Since the adaptation argument also presumes that China's interest in the SCS remains constant, one should also anticipate that China would seek to maintain the status quo, or even seize opportunities to consolidate its claims in the area. An adaptation argument can thus account for decreases in the level of Chinese cooperativeness. Graphs 2.1 and 2.2 depict the degree of Chinese cooperativeness under the learning and adaptation arguments.

This chapter will highlight how changes in the regional environment catalyzed increases in China's interest in multilateral cooperation. Graph 2.3 provides a visual map of how China's major accommodations on multilateral negotiations on the SCS dispute between 1995 and 2002 came after changes in its external environment. This pattern adheres closely to that laid out under the adaptation argument.

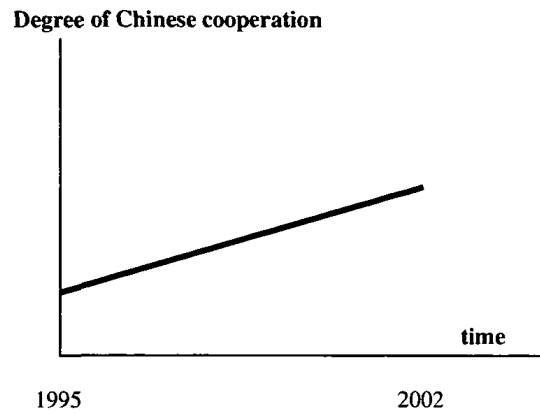
Arguably, a correlation between U.S. presence in the region and Chinese cooperativeness does not indicate that there is a causal relationship between the two. To back up this chapter's thesis that Beijing's fear of U.S. encirclement was the primary reason for its willingness to engage in multilateral negotiations—that a causal relationship exists—this article presents writings by Chinese strategic analysts to show how their threat perceptions about the possibility of U.S. containment resulted in the advocacy of a more accommodating, cooperative stance toward the SCS dispute and ASEAN.

III. Western Pressure as Catalyst for Establishing Bilateral Relations with ASEAN States

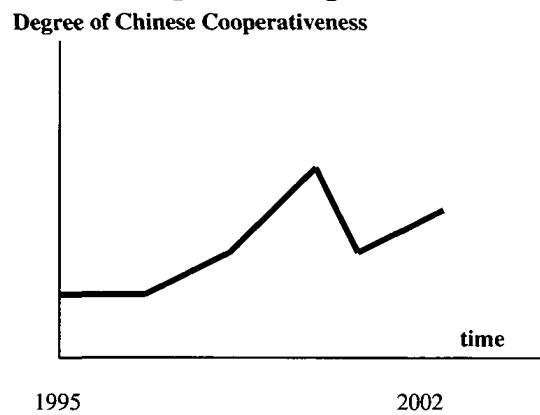
China started to pay attention to relations with its neighbors only after 1989.¹³ Ironically, it was Western pressure that catalyzed China into action. Beijing's crackdown on the student-led Tiananmen demonstrations in 1989 led to diplomatic isolation of China by influential Western states almost overnight. The ease with

13. ZHANG Yunling is director of the Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies (IAPS) at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). ZHANG Yunling, "Ruhe Kandai Woguo de Zhoubian Guanxi he Anquan Wenti," [How to View Our Periphery Relations and Security Problems], June 28, 2005, available at <http://www.iapscass.cn/XueShuWZ/showcontent.asp?id=356>.

Graph 2.1: Degree of Chinese Cooperativeness under the Learning Argument*



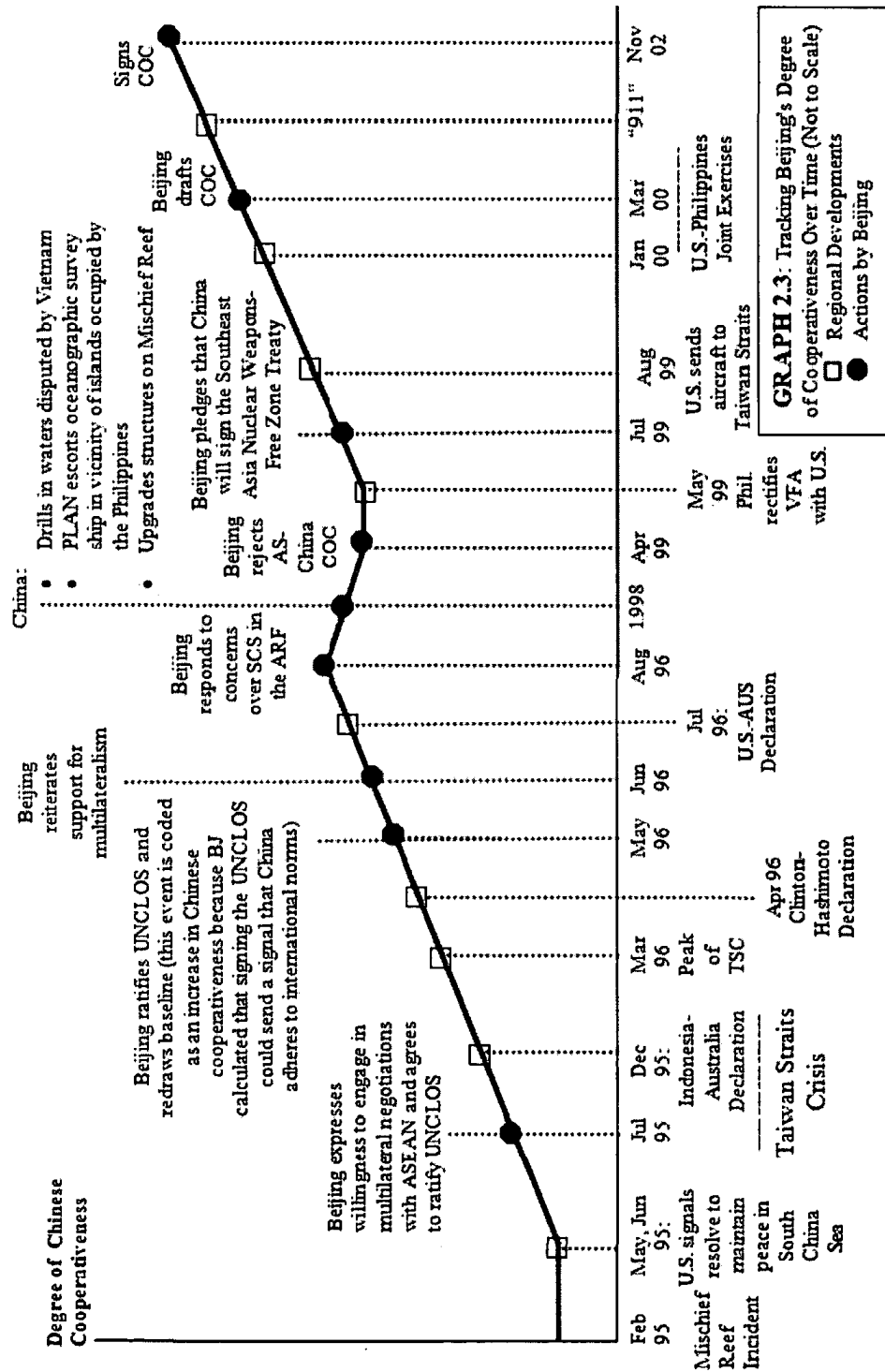
Graph 2.2: Degree of Chinese Cooperativeness under the Adaptation Argument*



*Figure not drawn to scale

which the Soviet empire dissolved further exacerbated Beijing's sense of vulnerability in the post-Cold War world order. Not only was its political authority highly susceptible to domestic upheavals, its strategic leverage in the U.S.-Soviet rivalry had also dissolved.

It was the East Asian region that showed muted criticism, if not sympathy, to China. In the wake of the Tiananmen crisis, Chinese foreign minister QIAN Qichen made peripheral relations the



top priority in China's foreign policy.¹⁴ The idea was that China should maintain a peaceful, stable regional environment to act as a buffer against turbulent changes in other parts of the world, such as the Gulf War, the NATO intervention into Bosnia, and the collapse of the Soviet Union.¹⁵

Thus from the early 1990s, China focused on establishing and strengthening relations with regional actors. This effort was primarily bilateral in nature. The first target of China's "good neighbor" [*mulin zhengce*] policy was Southeast Asian states.¹⁶ Strong advocates of the norm of non-interference in the internal affairs of others, ASEAN states refrained from joining the chorus of international criticism in the aftermath of Tiananmen. That a number of these states combined vibrant economies with centralized regimes offered an alternative developmental model that resonated well with a Chinese leadership struggling to maintain economic liberalization and political control.¹⁷ ASEAN states were not only potential trading partners, but also potential political allies that shared China's concerns about external intrusions. In 1990, Premier LI Peng visited Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines and Laos.¹⁸ By August 1992, Beijing had normalized relations with every single Asia-Pacific country, including Indonesia (August 8, 1990), Singapore (October 3, 1990), and Brunei (September 30, 1991).¹⁹ During this period, Beijing also significantly upgraded ties with the Philippines, opened unofficial talks with Taiwan, and be-

14. Bin YU, "China and Its Asian Neighbors: Implications for Sino-U.S. Relations," in Yong DENG and Fei-Ling WANG eds., *In the Eyes of the Dragon: China Views the World* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), p. 190.

15. *Ibid.*

16. ZHANG Yunling (2005).

17. Alice D. Ba, "China-ASEAN Renavigate Relations for the 21st Century," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (July/August 2003), p. 632.

18. *Ibid.*

19. Beijing normalized relations with all Asia-Pacific countries except Taiwan, which Beijing considers part of the mainland. See James C. Hsiung, "China's Omni-Directional Diplomacy: Realignment to Cope with Monopolar U.S. Power," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 35, No. 6 (June 1995), p. 574. See also Bin YU, p. 190. As part of its good neighbor policy, China also signed a summary of talks with Russia in December 1991. In 1992, China established diplomatic relations with South Korea and the Central Asian states Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan. See LAI Yueh-Tsan, "China's Strategy toward the Asia-Pacific Multilateral Mechanism," *RUSI Journal*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (February 2004), p. 68.

gan establishing a framework for expanding economic and social exchanges.²⁰

Appreciation of ASEAN's muted response caused Beijing to lower the importance of the SCS dispute in its foreign policy priorities.²¹ After normalizing relations with ASEAN states, ASEAN invited China to attend ASEAN's Post-Ministerial Conference (PMC)—a meeting of ASEAN foreign ministers with their Dialogue Partner counterparts—for the first time in 1991.²² This continued each year until 1995, when China asked to become a “full dialogue partner” of ASEAN at the August PMC.²³

IV. 1995 Mischief Reef Incident

China's Assertiveness

Despite its attempts to emerge from the isolation of the post-Tiananmen period, China remained largely inattentive to the impact of what its neighbors saw as a powerful state's forceful behavior. China undercut its “good neighbor” policy in the 1990s by assertively claiming sovereignty over the SCS. In February 1992, China passed a territorial law declaring that China's territory included the mainland and its offshore islands, such as Taiwan and various affiliated islands including Diaoyu Island, Penghu Islands, Dongsha Islands, Xisha Islands, Nansha (Spratly) Islands, and other islands that belong to China.²⁴ The law also reserved China's right to “adopt all necessary measures” to deal with ships passing through the SCS that were “not innocent.”²⁵ In February 1995, the

20. Avery Goldstein, “The Diplomatic Face of China's Grand Strategy,” *The China Quarterly*, No. 168 (December 2001), p. 838.

21. LEE Lai To, *China and the South China Sea Dialogues* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1999), p. 14-15.

22. LAI Yueh-Tsan, p. 68.

23. Robert Sutter, *China's Rise in Asia: Promises and Perils* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), p. 185.

24. See “Law on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone of the People's Republic of China,” February 25, 1992, p. 1. Available at http://www.un.org/depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/PDFFILES/CHN_1992_Law.pdf.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 2. In April that year, *China Daily* quoted General ZHANG Xusan, the deputy commander-in-chief of the People's Liberation Army (PLAN), as saying that China planned to become a regional naval power by developing more advanced weaponry. In addition, China would adjust its strategy to protect its claims over disputed territories in the South China Sea. See “Senior Officer Outlines China's Naval Ambitions,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. 155, No. 15, April 16, 1992; Leszek Buszynski, “ASEAN, The Declaration on Conduct, and the South China Sea,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (December 2003), p. 346.

Philippines revealed that China had seized Mischief Reef, a 15-square mile reef and spit in the Spratly Islands which the Philippines also claims. This seizure triggered much alarm in ASEAN. Not only was it an armed occupation, it occurred less than a year after China's Foreign Minister QIAN Qichen rejected the use of force as a means of resolving the SCS dispute during the first ARF meeting in July 1994.²⁶ It was also the first time that China actively asserted itself against a claimant other than Vietnam, thereby destroying the belief that China would only act aggressively toward Vietnam and not toward other regional actors.²⁷

ASEAN voiced its worry over China's increasing assertiveness in the SCS through a public statement of "concern" and by forcefully rebuking Beijing during the first ASEAN-China Senior Officials Meeting (ACSOM) held in April 1995 in Hangzhou, southeastern China.²⁸ ASEAN's ability to present its case in a unified manner was unprecedented and took the Chinese by surprise.²⁹ According to Jusuf WANANDI, an Indonesian analyst deeply involved in regional forums, "there was a very hectic exchange, direct and quite unsettling to the Chinese."³⁰

The unity of ASEAN's disapproval caused the Chinese to take hard look at their approach to Southeast Asia. China's assertiveness in the SCS threatened to unravel the careful, systematic attempt to improve relations with Southeast Asian nations that had started in the mid-1970s.³¹

Nevertheless, China did not consider multilateral negotiations with ASEAN as a tool for reassurance at this point in time. It emphasized bilateral negotiations, because its leverage over other claimants would be greater and it could dominate the discussions.³²

26. Allen S. Whiting, "ASEAN Eyes China: The Security Dimension," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (April 1997) p. 301. See also Ralf Emmers, p. 10.

27. Mark J. Valencia, "China and the South China Sea Disputes," *Adelphi Paper* 298, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) p. 6-7.

28. Allen S. Whiting, p. 319.

29. Interviews with Southeast Asian officials and academics, June 2005 and January 2006. 14 out of 16 Southeast Asian interlocutors highlighted the impact of this incident. See also Johanna Sun, "China Gets Stern Warning on Spratlys," *Inter Press Service*, May 2, 1995.

30. Anurat MANIPHAN, "China Backs Further Dialogue But Proves Wary About Change," *Bangkok Post (Thailand)*, June 14, 1996, FBIS DR/EAS.

31. Interviews with Southeast Asian officials and academics, January 2006. Interviews with Chinese academics, January 2006.

32. Interview with Southeast Asian diplomat, January 2006. See also Jianwei WANG, "Managing Conflict: Chinese Perspectives on Multilateral Diplomacy and Col-

Immediately after the April ACSOM, China took pains to emphasize that the Spratly issue was not formally part of the multilateral agenda.³³ In addition, China portrayed the ASEAN-China talks as a bilateral discussion by describing ASEAN as one group.³⁴ To reassure regional actors, China issued a joint statement on a code of conduct (COC) with the Philippines in August 1995. This statement rejected the use of force and called for the peaceful settlement of the bilateral dispute.³⁵ Southeast Asian diplomats noted that bilateral agreements were tactics China employed to undermine the united ASEAN front displayed in April and avoid multilateral negotiations.³⁶

U.S. Mid-1995 Response to the Mischief Reef Incident

Chinese leaders exhibited greater flexibility in their willingness to conduct multilateral negotiations with ASEAN after the U.S. signaled its interest and resolve in maintaining the peace of the SCS through a series of statements in mid-1995. In May 1995, the U.S. State Department issued a statement highlighting U.S. interest in the peace and security of the sea lanes.³⁷ Although the statement did not break new ground on U.S. policy towards the SCS, it was a strong reminder that the U.S. remained a stakeholder in the region during a period in which Asian states perceived diminished U.S. interest in the area. The statement noted that the U.S. took no position on the legal merits of the competing claims, but emphasized that the U.S. would view "with serious concern" any claim or restriction on maritime activity inconsistent with international law. In

lective Security," in Yong DENG and Fei-ling WANG, eds., *In the Eyes of the Dragon: China Views the World* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), p. 83.

33. "Spratlys Not Part of Formal Talks with ASEAN," *Xinhua News Agency*, April 11, 1995.

34. Johanna Sun, "China Gets Stern Warning on Spratlys," *Inter Press Service*, May 2, 1995.

35. "China, Philippines Agree on Code of Conduct in Spratlys," *Associated Press*, August 15, 1995.

36. Edward Luce, "Philippines in Bilateral Spratlys Deal with China: ASEAN Multilateral Approach to Dispute Put In Doubt," *Financial Times*, August 11, 1995. Interview with Southeast Asian diplomat, June 2005.

37. See "Statement by the Acting Spokesman U.S. Department of State," in Ralph A. Cossa, ed., "Security Implications of Conflict in the South China Sea: Exploring Potential Triggers of Conflict," Appendix G (Honolulu, HI: Pacific Forum/CSIS, March 1998). Available at <http://community.middlebury.edu/~scs/docs/Cossa,%20Security%20Implications%20of%20%20Conflict%20in%20the%20S.ChinaSea.pdf>. See also Felix Soh, "U.S. Warns Against Restrictions in South China Sea, Block Press Tour to Spratlys," *The Straits Times (Singapore)*, May 12, 1995.

that same month, Stanley Roth, Senior Director for Asian Affairs at the National Security Council, reassured regional actors that the U.S. was elevating the priority the SCS dispute had in U.S. dialogue with Beijing.³⁸ U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Joseph Nye further affirmed in June that if conflict occurred in the Spratlys, the U.S. would be prepared to escort ships and ensure that free navigation continued.³⁹

Impact of U.S. Resolve on China's ASEAN/SCS Policy

A number of non-PRC analysts argue that the mid-1995 declarations had little deterrent effect on the Chinese. This is because the U.S. had consistently argued that its 1952 Mutual Defense Treaty with the Philippines did not cover features in the SCS.⁴⁰ In addition, its slow response to the Mischief Reef incident—China was found to have seized the reef in February 1995, but the State Department issued a formal statement only in May—convinced the Chinese that the U.S. remained disinterested in the Spratly dispute.⁴¹

However it is unlikely that China doubted the strength of U.S. resolve, particularly after the State Department declared its commitment to regional stability.⁴² Chinese analysts such as MA Yanbing and LIU Jiangyong dismissed the possibility of American neutrality in the dispute, arguing that the U.S. was covertly using the opportunity to encircle China:

38. Johanna Sun, "China Gets Stern Warning on Spratlys," *Inter Press Service*, May 2, 1995.

39. Nigel Holloway, "Jolt from the Blue: U.S. Prodded to Firm up its Policy on Spratlys," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 3, 1995, p. 22.

40. Carlyle A. Thayer, "China-ASEAN: Tensions Promote Discussions on a Code of Conduct," in Pacific Forum, CSIS, *Comparative Connections*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (July 1999), p. 39. Available at <http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/9902q.pdf>. See also Ralf Emmers, 2005, p. 8.

41. "China's Peoples' Liberation Army: Challenges for American Foreign Policy in Asia," Prepared Testimony of Richard D. Fisher Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee East Asian and Pacific Affairs Subcommittee, *Federal News Service*, October 11, 1995.

42. Interview with Chinese academic, January 2006. On the strength of U.S. deterrence, see Rosemary Foot, "Modes of Regional Conflict Management: Comparing Security Cooperation Over the Korean Peninsula, China-Taiwan, and the South China Sea," in Amitav ACHARYA and Evelyn Goh, eds., *Reassessing Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific: Competition, Congruence, and Transformation* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006). Forthcoming October 2006. Electronic document obtained from Rosemary Foot. See also Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge: China's Grand Strategy and International Security* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 110-1.

The U.S. appears to be “enthusiastically impartial” [*jiji zhongli*] in its pronouncements of non-interference in the Spratly issue, but if one examines its behavior, one realizes that the U.S. is actually making every effort to strengthen its military presence in the South China Sea.⁴³

Indeed Chinese analysts had carefully followed the U.S. response to the incident. TANG Jianguo notes that immediately after the Mischief Reef incident, the U.S. sent Stanley Roth as a special representative of the President to Manila to meet with Philippine President Fidel Ramos.⁴⁴ ZHU Tingchang reports that Roth “clearly expressed that the Clinton administration will support the Philippines’ efforts to prevent further Chinese aggressive behavior,”⁴⁵ while TANG Jianguo points out that after the incident the U.S. requested the Philippines to increase its military expenditure—proof that the U.S. “is striving to team up with ASEAN to contain China.”⁴⁶

U.S. declarations in May and June 1995 likely had a causal effect on China’s initial willingness to conduct multilateral discussions with ASEAN over the SCS dispute. Up until the ASEAN-China Ministerial Meeting (ACMM) held in Brunei in July 1995, China had insisted that all negotiations had to be bilateral.⁴⁷ However during the July ACMM—held after the mid-1995 U.S. statements—China made two significant concessions. First, Foreign Minister QIAN Qichen announced for the first time that China was prepared to discuss the Spratly Island issue multilaterally with

43. MA Yanbing is a researcher at the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR). LIU Jiangyong is the Deputy Director of Tsinghua University’s Institute of International Studies. MA Yanbing and LIU Jiangyong, “Lingtu, Bianjie ji Haiyu Zhengduan,” [Territorial, Border and Sea Disputes], in YAN Xuetong and JIN Dexiang, chief eds., *Dongya Heping yu Anquan* [Peace and Security in East Asia] (Shishi Chubanshe, 2005), p. 236.

44. TANG Jianguo, “Zhongguo yu Dongmeng Guanxi zhong de Meiguo Yinsu,” [The U.S. Factor in China-ASEAN Relations], *Taipingyang Xuebao* [Pacific Journal], No. 7 (2004), p. 62.

45. ZHU Tingchang, chief ed., *Zhongguo Zhoubian Anquan Huanjing yu Anquan Zhanlue* [China’s Regional Security Environment and Security Strategy] (Beijing: Shishi chubanshe, 2002), p. 322. See also “U.S. Expresses Support for Philippines Against China,” *Japan Economic Newswire*, March 31, 1995.

46. TANG Jianguo, p. 62. For similar observations that the U.S. presence in Southeast Asia is aimed at containing China, see also “Jingti Meiguo Zai Dongnanya de Junshi Cunzai,” [A Warning About America’s Military Presence in Southeast Asia], *Guojia Anquan Tongxun* [National Security Information], No. 8 (1999), p. 5.

47. LIM Kim Chew, “China Tells ASEAN It Is Prepared To Meet Over Spratly Isles Dispute,” *The Straits Times* (Singapore), July 31, 1995.

ASEAN.⁴⁸ Second, China was willing to accept the 1982 U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) as a basis for negotiation. China's willingness was significant because prior to this announcement, Beijing had consistently based its claim over the SCS on the nebulous argument that it had over 1,000 years of historical ties to the islands.⁴⁹ Although China refused to budge from its claim of sovereignty over the islands, the fact that it relented on these two counts was a "major advance" from Beijing's stance of just a few months ago during the April ACSOM in Hangzhou.⁵⁰ Hence it was only after the U.S. took a firm stand on the Mischief Reef incident that China adjusted its willingness to engage ASEAN multilaterally.⁵¹

V. 1995-1996: Changing Regional Dynamics

Increasing regional tensions and the fear of U.S. encirclement spurred China to exhibit more flexibility in conducting multilateral negotiations. Between 1995 and 1996, tensions between China, Taiwan, and the U.S. increased rapidly. U.S. President Clinton's decision to allow Taiwanese President LEE Teng-hui speak at Cornell University in May 1995 sparked strong condemnation from China as being a violation of the "One China policy."⁵² Beijing conducted provocative military exercises in December 1995, and test-fired missiles on top of military exercises in July 1995 and March 1996 in an attempt to deter the Taiwanese people and international Taiwan-watchers from supporting perceived separatist movements in the

48. *Ibid.*

49. Writing a year before this announcement, TANG Pingshan asserts that China has always based its claim to the South China Sea on historical grounds. TANG Pingshan, "Luetan Dongmeng Diqu Luntan," [A Summary and Discussion of the ASEAN Regional Forum], *Dangdai Yatai* [Contemporary Asia-Pacific], No. 6 (1994), p. 46. See also "Beijing Eases Hard-Line Position In Dispute Over Spratly Islands," *Washington Post*, July 31, 1995; Sheldon W. Simon, "ASEAN Regional Forum," in William M. Carpenter and David G. Wiencek, eds., *Asian Security Handbook: An Assessment of Political-Security Issues in the Asia-Pacific Region* (New York: ME Sharpe, 1996), p. 47.

50. Philippine Foreign Secretary Domingo SIAZON reporting on closed-door talks with QIAN Qichen, in Vijay JOSHI, "Reading Between Chinese Lines, ASEAN Sees Hope on Spratlys," *Associated Press*, July 31, 1995.

51. James R. Lilley, Ambassador to China from 1989-91, observes this in "Prepared Testimony of Ambassador James R. Lilley Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Subcommittee of East Asian and Pacific Affairs on U.S. Security Relationship with China and Taiwan," *Federal News Service*, February 7, 1996.

52. George Moffett and Sheila Tefft, "A Clinton About-Face Tweaks China," *Christian Science Monitor*, May 24, 1995.

run-up to the presidential elections in Taiwan.⁵³ Tensions culminated in March 1996 when the United States sent two aircraft carrier battle groups to the waters off Taiwan in response to China's third missile test, in which all three missiles landed within 35 miles of Taiwan.⁵⁴ The speed by which the U.S. intervened underlined for Beijing the dangers of escalating tensions.⁵⁵ In particular, this lesson served to caution against the use of Chinese force in the SCS.⁵⁶

Just one month after the most intense phase of the Taiwan Straits crisis, the U.S. and Japanese governments tightened their alliance under the Clinton-Hashimoto Declaration of April 1996. The Declaration committed Japan to granting the U.S. access to Japanese bases and providing logistical and rear-end support.⁵⁷ As such, Japan's role in the alliance expanded significantly from being a recipient of U.S. protection to a partner with the mandate to maintain regional stability.⁵⁸ In September 1997, the revised Japan-U.S. Defense Guidelines that formalized the 1996 Declaration stated that the scope of the alliance covered "situations in the areas surrounding Japan."⁵⁹ The vagueness of the phrase strengthened arguments among Chinese analysts that the revived U.S.-Japan alliance included the Taiwan Straits and the SCS.⁶⁰

The U.S. then moved on to sign a joint security declaration with Australia in July 1996. The Declaration explicitly highlighted the Taiwan Straits and the Spratly Islands as unstable hotspots

53. Robert Sutter, p. 209-10; David M. Lampton, *Same Bed, Different Dreams: Managing U.S.-China Relations, 1989-2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 52.

54. David M. Lampton, p. 46.

55. Robert Sutter, p. 210; David M. Lampton, p. 46.

56. Interview with Chinese analyst, January 2006.

57. "Japan-U.S. Joint Declaration on Security—Alliance for the 21st Century," The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, April 17, 1996, Available at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/security.html>.

58. WU Xinbo, "The End of the Silver Lining: A Chinese View of the US-Japanese Alliance," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Winter 2005), p. 120.

59. Thomas J. Christensen, "China, the U.S.-Japan Alliance, and the Security Dilemma in East Asia," *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (Spring 1999), p. 62-3.

60. *Ibid.* See also XU Zhixian and YANG Bojiang, "New Acts—A Historical Retrogression," *Beijing Review*, Vol. 42, No. 24 (June 14, 1999), p. 14; LI Changjiu provides an example of how Japan has made use of the strengthened U.S.-Japan alliance to extend Tokyo's reach into the South China Sea. He argues that during the May 1998 social unrests in Indonesia, Japan declared that if the Indonesian upheavals disturbed the stability of the Malacca Straits, the U.S. and Japan could consider intervening to maintain regional stability. See LI Changjiu, "Bu Pingheng de Zhonggrimei Sanjiao Guanxi," [The Unbalanced Trilateral Relationship between China, Japan and the U.S.], *Shijie Jingji yu Zhengzhi* [World Economics and Politics], No. 10 (1998), p. 47.

which required “forward deployment of the U.S. military in Australia. . . to effectively handle future regional and global challenges.”⁶¹ Beijing perceived this as another barely-veiled attempt by the U.S. to cultivate security relations that would contain China.⁶²

In December 1995, Indonesia and Australia inked a military defense agreement. The agreement was significant because up till this point, Indonesia had steadfastly refused to align itself with powers outside Southeast Asia.⁶³ The agreement pledged both parties to “consult each other in the case of adverse challenges to either party or to their common security interests and, if appropriate, consider measures which might be taken either individually or jointly and in accordance with the processes of each party.”⁶⁴ Both parties declared that the agreement was not a military alliance and was not directed against specific third parties.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, ASEAN states welcomed it as a strategic counterweight to potential Chinese belligerence,⁶⁶ and unanimously agreed that it sent an important deterrent signal to Beijing.⁶⁷ Chinese analysts also noted that China’s assertiveness in the Mischief Reef incident heightened Indonesia’s worries of Chinese revisionism, thereby compelling it to forge a military relationship with Australia.⁶⁸

Beijing’s Re-calculations

Thus from a Chinese perspective, developments in Southeast Asia, combined with others in the Asia-Pacific in the mid-1990s, were beginning to encircle China and limit its room for maneuver.

61. Quoted in Avery Goldstein (2005), p. 103.

62. *Ibid.*

63. Allen S. Whiting, p. 301. Although Indonesia is not involved in the Spratly Islands dispute, it has direct concerns over Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea. Official Chinese maps show that Beijing’s claims to sovereignty over the South China Sea include a gas field off Indonesia’s Natuna Islands which Jakarta is developing at a cost of about US\$35 billion with U.S. and Japanese energy companies.

64. “Australia-Indonesia Agreement on Maintaining Security,” in Gary Brown, Frank Frost, and Stephen Sherlock, “The Australian-Indonesian Security Agreement: Issues and Implications,” (Department of the Parliamentary Library, May 1996), Appendix A, p. 17. Available at <http://www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs/rp/1995-96/96rp25.pdf>.

65. Michael Richardson, “Pact Reflects Regional Security Concerns,” *The Australian*, December 19, 1995.

66. *Ibid.*

67. Allen S. Whiting, p. 304.

68. ZHANG Xizhen is a professor at Beijing University’s School of International Relations. ZHANG Xizhen, “Zhongguo tong Dongmeng de Mulin Huxin Huoban Guanxi,” [The Good-Neighborliness and Mutual Trust in China-ASEAN Partnership and Relationship], *Dangdai Yatai* [Contemporary Asia-Pacific], No. 2, (1999), p. 27.

These regional developments forced Beijing's realization that the world was not headed toward multipolarity, but that "the super-power is more super, and the many great powers are less great."⁶⁹ More specifically, FANG Hua highlighted how the U.S. was maintaining a large military force to consolidate its power in the region, and strengthening its bilateral alliances with Japan, South Korea, Philippines, Australia and Thailand, in a "five-finger strategy [*wuzhi zhanlue*]" to contain China.⁷⁰ Chinese analysts also feared that the U.S. would take advantage of the China-ASEAN territorial disputes to "drive a wedge" between them.⁷¹ LU Jianren argued that although the U.S. publicly eschewed involvement in the SCS dispute, its actions belied its intentions: the U.S. was cutting deals with the Philippines to prevent China from claiming its sovereign rights to the Spratly Islands, and to limit China's air and naval force capabilities in the region.⁷² XIN Benjian warned that unless China discussed and negotiated the SCS dispute with Southeast Asian states, the U.S. and Japan might intervene in the issue and strengthen their control of the sea lanes.⁷³

In addition, Chinese analysts were worried that China's assertiveness would push ASEAN states to ratchet up their security ties with the U.S., or worse yet, join an anti-China coalition led by the U.S.⁷⁴ ZHANG Xizhen noted that China's aggressiveness in the Taiwan Straits crisis undermined its reassurances to ASEAN that Beijing eschewed force in the SCS.⁷⁵ At the peak of the Taiwan

69. WANG Jisi, "Building a Constructive Relationship," in Morton Abramowitz, FUNABASHI Yoichi, and WANG Jisi, eds., *China-Japan-U.S.: Managing the Trilateral Relationship* (Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange, 1998), p. 22. For the Chinese government's acceptance of U.S. hegemony from the mid-1990s onwards, see JIA Qingguo, "Learning to Live with the Hegemon: Evolution of China's Policy Toward the U.S. Since the End of the Cold War," *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 14, No. 44 (2005), p. 404.

70. FANG Hua, "Yatai Anquan Jiagou de Xianzhuang, Qushi ji Zhongguo de Zuoyong," [The Current Asia-Pacific Security Framework: Trends and China's Role] *Shijie Jingji yu Zhengzhi* [World Economics and Politics], No. 2 (2000), p. 12.

71. WANG Jisi, "China's Changing Role in Asia," Atlantic Council of the United States (January 2004), p. 9.

72. LU Jianren is a senior research fellow at IAPS. LU Jianren, "Yatai Daguo Zai Yazhou Diqiu de Liyi," [Asia-Pacific Great Powers' Interests in Southeast Asia], *Shijie Jingji yu Zhengzhi* [World Economics and Politics], No. 2 (2000), p. 45.

73. XIN Benjian, "Yatai Diqiu: Meiguo 21 Shiji Quanqiu Zhanlue de Diyi Zhongdian," [The Asia-Pacific Region: The No. 1 Focus of America's 21st Century Global Strategy], *Shijie Jingji yu Zhengzhi* [World Economics and Politics], No. 8 (2001), p. 30.

74. ZHANG Xizhen, p. 27.

75. *Ibid.*

Straits Crisis in March 1996, TANG Jiaxuan deliberately tried to reassure ASEAN by distinguishing between the Taiwan and SCS dispute. According to Tang, Taiwan was an “internal matter” whereas the Spratly dispute was a “multinational issue” that required “peaceful negotiations.”⁷⁶

These “strategic realignments” in the mid-1990s caused Beijing to reevaluate its policy towards ASEAN.⁷⁷ FANG Changping admits that it was only from the mid-1990s—after China’s peripheral security environment had changed—that China’s perspective on the utility of multilateral cooperation underwent a transformation.⁷⁸ Bilateral reassurances had not been sufficient in convincing regional states of China’s peaceful intentions in the SCS. China’s reluctance to engage ASEAN multilaterally on the issue aggravated the “China threat” theory prompted by China’s assertive actions during this period.⁷⁹

By 1996, China realized that its original calculation of the costs and benefits of multilateralism and bilateralism was mistaken.⁸⁰ While during the first half of the 1990s it considered multilateralism an unnecessary sacrifice of its power advantage by providing regional actors the opportunity to unite against Beijing, by 1996 it

76. Emphasis added. See “Spratly, Taiwan Not the Same, Says Chinese Minister,” *Reuters*, March 18, 1996; See also “China Says Tension in Taiwan Does Not Affect Spratlys,” *Japan Economic Newswire*, March 18, 1996. Chinese statements such as these which admit that the South China Sea dispute is “multilateral” do not mean that China is willing to negotiate sovereignty with other claimant states. Technically, once China claims all of the islands, the issue becomes an internal matter. China’s MOFA was criticized at home for making statements such as these. Comments by Thomas Christensen, March 2006.

77. XU Xin, “Rough Draft: Chinese Approach to Multilateralism in the Asia Pacific: A Path to China’s Peaceful Rise,” Paper prepared for the Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIJA) International Workshop, “External Strategy of the New Chinese Leadership,” Tokyo, Japan, February 9-10, 2003, p. 10. Available at http://jia.or.jp/pdf/asia_centre/h15_china/1_newchinese.pdf.

78. FANG Changping is a professor at Renmin University’s School of International Studies. Fang Changping, “Duobian Zhuyi yu Zhongguo Zhoubian Anquan Zhanlue,” [Multilateralism and China’s Regional Security Strategy], *Jiaoxue yu Yanjiu* [Teaching and Research], No. 5 (2004), p. 48.

79. Interview with Chinese analyst, January 2006. Not only was China assertive in its diplomacy regarding Taiwan and the South China Sea in the mid-1990s, it had also allegedly transferred M-11 missile technology to Pakistan, sold nuclear technology to Iran, conducted nuclear weapons tests, acted as a prickly interlocutor at many international negotiations, and augmented its military budget when most other countries have been cutting back in the wake of the Cold War.

80. Avery Goldstein (2005), p. 120; Rosemary Foot, “Chinese Strategies in a U.S.-hegemonic Global Order,” *International Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 1 (2006), p. 85.

realized that avoiding multilateralism and pursuing bilateralism was not providing it with the leverage it had hoped for. When disputes intensified over the Mischief Reef, regional actors united anyway.⁸¹ Bilateralism did not stop ASEAN from “internationalizing” the dispute.⁸²

China needed another means of articulating its benign intentions and warding off the “China threat” theory.⁸³ Multilateralism offered a complementary instrument of reassuring regional actors, fostering an image of responsible behavior, as well as hedging against possible U.S. encirclement.⁸⁴ If multilateralism eased neighbors’ concerns, accepting the constraints of multilateral negotiations would be preferable to the risk of isolation and encirclement brought about by its heretofore assertive behavior.⁸⁵

Impact of Regional Changes on China’s ASEAN/SCS Policy

China’s willingness to discuss the Spratly dispute multilaterally with ASEAN was thus more forthcoming in 1996.⁸⁶ In June 1996, during the second ACSOM held in Bukit Tinggi, West Sumatra, Beijing reiterated its support for ASEAN-China multilateral discussions of the dispute. Izar IBRAHIM, director-general of the Indonesian foreign ministry’s political department, noted that the Chinese seemed increasingly more open to have a multilateral dialogue with ASEAN, and that ASEAN should take the opportunity to exchange views with Beijing.⁸⁷ During the third ARF conference in August 1996, China responded to the concerns expressed by In-

81. Avery Goldstein (2005), p. 120.

82. ZHANG Xizhen, p. 27. “Internationalizing” the dispute refers to the interference of non-claimant powers—particularly Great Powers like the U.S. and Japan—in China’s negotiations with claimant states.

83. DAO Shulin, SHANG Qianlong, and ZHAI Kun are analysts at CICIR. DAO Shulin, SHANG Qianlong, and ZHAI Kun, “Zhongguo Dui Dongmeng Zhengce Yanjiu Baogao,” [A Research Report on China’s ASEAN Policy], *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi* [Contemporary International Relations], Vol. 10 (2002), p. 1-10.

84. Thomas J. Christensen, “Fostering Stability or Creating a Monster? The Rise of China and U.S. Policy Toward East Asia,” *International Security*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Summer 2006), p. 83; Evan Medeiros, “Strategic Hedging and the Future of Asia-Pacific Stability,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Winter 2005/06), p. 153.

85. FANG Hua, p. 15. Alastair Iain Johnston and Paul Evans, “China’s Engagement with Multilateral Security Institutions,” in Alastair Iain Johnston and Robert S. Ross, eds., *Engaging China: The Management of an Emerging Power* (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 258-61; Avery Goldstein (2005), p. 120.

86. Interview with Southeast Asian diplomat, June 2005.

87. Anurat MANIPHAN, “China Backs Further Dialogue But Proves Wary About Change,” *Bangkok Post*, June 14, 1996, FBIS DR/EAS.

onesia, the Philippines and Vietnam over the dispute, and also praised the consultations in multilateral Track II seminars.⁸⁸

However the fact that Beijing adroitly avoided making strategic concessions while maintaining its willingness to conduct multilateral discussions provides evidence that external developments had a causal effect in bringing about more multilateral Chinese efforts—as opposed to an argument that credits China’s cooperative behavior to the internalization of peaceful norms as a result of ASEAN engagement efforts. A number of internal circulation materials indicate that China’s accommodating stance was a tactical shift in strategy rather than a fundamental change in values and worldview. For example, LU Jianren’s assertion that China’s willingness to “put aside differences and conduct joint development [*gezhi zhengyi gongtong kaifa*]” was “a strategy and not a goal” suggests that China’s long-term intention was to establish sovereign control over the islands, or at minimum, maintain the status quo.⁸⁹ ZHANG Zhirong and WU Chong indicate that China’s concessions were born out of constrained choice when they concede that China should employ diplomatic instruments because military action would be too costly.⁹⁰

VI. No Relaxation in China’s Claim to Sovereignty

This tactical flexibility allowed China to delay a multilateral resolution of the dispute as well as reassure ASEAN at the same time. In May 1996, China puzzled ASEAN by taking two measures that sent conflicting messages. First, it ratified UNCLOS—a move that ASEAN welcomed for providing a legal basis for negotiations even though UNCLOS does not take a clear position on which claimants have sovereignty. By relaxing its absolutist historical claim to the island and accepting international law, China seemed to be softening its stance. Immediately after China ratified UNCLOS however, it redefined its baselines in a way that contradicted

88. Allen S. Whiting, p. 319.

89. LU Jianren, “Nansha Zhengduan ji Duice,” [Disputes in the Spratlys and Countermeasures], in Asia Pacific Research Institute, ed., *Nansha Wenti Yanjiu Ziliao* [Research Materials on the Spratly Islands Problem] (Beijing: Chinese Academy of Social Sciences), p. 311. Photocopy obtained from Harvard College Library. The phrase *gezhi zhengyi gongtong kaifa* was first promulgated by DENG Xiaoping in 1984.

90. ZHANG Zhirong and WU Chong, “Jiejue Nansha Zhengduan de Duice Xuanze,” [Choices Among Countermeasures for Resolving the Spratly Dispute], in *Nansha wenti yanjiu ziliao*, p. 27.

UNCLOS.⁹¹ Under UNCLOS, only mid-ocean archipelagic states—and not a continental country with several islands like China—can draw baselines connecting the outermost points of outlying islands and project sovereignty from there. China redrew its baselines based on the archipelagic principle and extended its maritime jurisdiction from 370,000 square kilometers to three million square kilometers off its coastline.⁹² This suggests that China ratified UNCLOS not because it was persuaded by ASEAN states to loosen its sovereignty claims, but because Beijing wanted to use an internationally-recognized legal document like UNCLOS, instead of assertive military action or murky historical claims, to buttress its claims over the SCS.

Adroit Chinese diplomacy during the second ACSOM in June however, managed to turn the tables on ASEAN. Deputy Foreign Minister TANG Jiaxuan suggested that ASEAN and China allow an exchange of views between UNCLOS experts from all sides. This suggestion not only deflected questions about China's controversial baseline redefinition that May,⁹³ it also placed upon ASEAN the burden of providing proof that Beijing had done something illegal.⁹⁴ Given the loopholes in the 1982 Law of the Sea, the burden was a heavy one to bear and thus bought more time for Beijing to delay multilateral negotiations that could force it to make concessions on sovereignty during a period in which Beijing was more preoccupied with Taiwan, Japan and the U.S.⁹⁵

Subsequent Chinese encroachments in the SCS provide evidence that Beijing's foray into cooperative multilateralism was more of a tactic than a relaxation of its sovereignty claim. In 1998, a Chinese ship drilled in waters claimed by Vietnam, and the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) escorted an oceanographic survey ship in the vicinity of islands occupied by Philippine troops.⁹⁶ In

91. China's action so bedeviled ASEAN that it prompted Philippine foreign undersecretary Rodolfo SEVERINO to comment on the success of ASEAN's attempts to engage China: "There has been some movement. I just don't know if it's forward, backward or sideways." See Johanna Son, "Southeast Asia: China Springs New Surprise in Territorial Tussle," *Inter Press Service*, July 31, 1996.

92. Yojana SHARMA, "With an Eye on China, Indonesia Shows its Guard," *Inter Press Service*, September 2, 1996.

93. "ASEAN, PRC Discuss Island Disputes, Nuclear Issue," *Bangkok Post (Thailand)*, June 14, 1996, FBIS-EAS-96-118. See also Allen S. Whiting, p. 319.

94. *Ibid.*

95. *Ibid.* Interview with Southeast Asian MOFA official, January 2006.

96. Mark J. Valencia, "Beijing and the South China Sea: Movement or Mirage?" *Business Times (Singapore)*, August 29, 1998.

response to Manila's protest, the PRC embassy spokesman declared that "the action was justified by the fact that all islands, reefs and shoals within the Spratly Island complex belonged to China."⁹⁷ In a violation of the 1995 China-Philippines joint statement on a COC, China began upgrading its structures on Mischief Reef (though it did send ASEAN prior notification of its actions).⁹⁸ China claimed them to be mere fishing shelters, but the new structures were multi-storey buildings on concrete platforms manned by Chinese military personnel, large enough to serve as landing pads for military helicopters and able to mount anti-aircraft guns.⁹⁹ China also categorically refused to refrain from building new structures on the Spratly islands.¹⁰⁰

VII. Multilateral Negotiations on a Code of Conduct

Initial Resistance

Multilateralism has emerged as a low-cost instrument for China in relation to the SCS dispute as Beijing has been able to avoid making concessions by capitalizing on intra-ASEAN frictions. In their writings on the SCS disputes, Chinese analysts often point out the 1995 Mischief Reef incident, and then move onto a positive appraisal of China's 2002 decision to sign the Declaration of a Code of Conduct (DCOC) as an example of China's exercise of self-restraint and commitment to good neighborly ties.¹⁰¹ A closer examination of the negotiation process in the seven years between

97. *Ibid.*

98. Aileen S.P. Baviera, "The South China Sea Disputes After the 2002 Declaration: Beyond Confidence-Building," in SAW Swee-Hock, SHENG Lijun, and CHIN Kin Wah, eds., *ASEAN-China Relations: Realities and Prospects* (Singapore: ISEAS Publications, 2005), p. 346.

99. David Wiencek, "Reviving an Asian Alliance," *Washington Times*, May 27, 1999.

100. Maria Teresa, "Talks on Reef End Without Substantial Result," *Japan Economic Newswire*, March 23, 1999.

101. See for example, HOU Songling, "Zhongguo yu Dongmeng Guanxi Zhong de Bu Wending Yinsu—Nansha Wenti," [The Destabilizing Factor in China's Relations with ASEAN: The Spratly Dispute] *Dongnanya Yanjiu* [Southeast Asian Studies], No. 5/6 (2000), p. 69; ZHANG Yunling, "Dongnanya Diqu de Weilai Fazhan jiqi Yingxiang," [The Southeast Asian Region's Future Development and Influence], in ZHANG Yunling, chief ed., *Weilai 10-15 Nian Zhongguo Zai Yatai Diqu Mianlin de Guoji Huanjing* [The International Environment China Will Face in the Asia-Pacific Region in the Next 10-15 Years] (Beijing: Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Press, November 2003), p. 305. HOU Songling is a professor at Jinan University's Southeast Asian Studies Center.

1995 and 2002 however, shows that Beijing agreed to multilateral negotiations on a COC only when confronted by the fear of U.S. encirclement.

The idea for a multilateral ASEAN-China COC was first proposed by the Philippines in April 1999 during the fifth ASEAN-China Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) in Kunming, China.¹⁰² During the meeting, China expressed its strong opposition toward a multilateral document by capitalizing on ASEAN's inability to present a united front—despite Malaysia's earlier warning that the only way for ASEAN countries to make an impact on China was to have ASEAN solidarity. Unlike in 1995, when ASEAN contested China's occupation of Mischief Reef with one voice, this time it remained silent. ASEAN members were still struggling with economic recovery after the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, and did not want to expand political capital on territorial issues. Many also remained grateful towards Beijing for not devaluing its currency during the crisis.¹⁰³ As Philippine Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Lauro BAJA lamented, "On Mischief Reef, we were left alone. The other countries said that while they sympathize and understand our situation, the issue is only a Philippine-China problem."¹⁰⁴

VIII. 1999-2000: Regional Changes

In the face of ASEAN states' potential regional alignment with the U.S. however, China has shown greater flexibility in negotiating a multilateral COC. On May 27, 1999, the Philippine Senate—the legislative body that had ousted two of the largest U.S. military facilities in the Pacific from the Philippines in 1991—ratified the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) with the U.S.¹⁰⁵ Alarm over China's increasing assertiveness in the SCS had been the spur behind the Senate's change of attitude towards U.S. forces. The Philippines hoped that by allowing the U.S. to resume large-scale war exercises in its former colony, the VFA would deter further Chinese incursions into the SCS. Chinese analysts watched this development with concern, worried that the VFA would give the U.S. a larger pres-

102. Carlyle A. Thayer (July 1999), p. 37.

103. Carlyle A. Thayer (July 1999), p. 37.

104. "Manila Said Not Getting ASEAN Aid in Mischief Reef Issue," *Manila Business World*, April 13, 1999, FBIS-EAS-1999-0413.

105. Luz BAGUIORO, "Manila Senate Ratifies Pact with U.S.," *The Straits Times* (Singapore), May 28, 1999.

ence in the region and restrict China's room for maneuver.¹⁰⁶ The U.S. bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in June 1999 further strengthened conspiracy theories in China that the U.S. was trying to contain it on all fronts.

In August 1999, two U.S. aircraft carriers, *Kitty Hawk* and *Constellation*, held exercises in the SCS as deterrence against escalation of tensions during a troubled period in cross-straits relations.¹⁰⁷ From late January to early March 2000, the U.S. conducted joint military exercises involving approximately 5000 forces with the Philippines, the first major exercise between the two armed forces since 1995.¹⁰⁸ In addition, the U.S. expanded its annual U.S.-Thailand COBRA GOLD military exercise to include Singapore, upping the personnel involved to 200,000.¹⁰⁹

China again observed these developments with worry, despite being reassured by officials that the resumption of large-scale U.S.-Philippines exercises was not directed against any third party.¹¹⁰ On March 14, the eve of the first ACSOM convened to discuss a COC on the SCS, China warned ASEAN against carrying out large-scale military exercises and enhancing military alliances with nations outside the region. YANG Yanyi, Senior Counselor of China's Foreign Ministry, pointed out that region was going through a process of confidence-building measures and did not need influences from external countries: "If some countries continue to beef up their military alliances or joint exercises, all sides will continue to be suspicious of one another."¹¹¹ The Chinese were also watchful of Japan's decision to send Self Defense Forces to participate in various joint military exercises between the U.S. and Southeast Asian states in 2000. According to ZHANG Xiusan, "increasing Japanese confi-

106. See "Jingti Meiguo Zai Dongnanya de Junshi Cunzai," [A Warning About America's Military Presence in Southeast Asia], p. 7.

107. Glenn Schloss and CHOW Chung-yan, "PLA Garrison Placed on 'Alert'," *South China Morning Post*, August 15, 1999.

108. Sheldon Simon, "U.S.-ASEAN Relations: Revitalizing Military Ties, The Cambodian Tribunal, and Problems with UNCTAD," in *Pacific Forum*, CSIS, *Comparative Connections*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (April 2000), p. 45. Available at <http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/0001q.pdf>.

109. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

110. For a report on the U.S. and Philippines reassuring China, see "U.S., Philippines Say War Games Not Directed at China," *Malaysia General News*, January 28, 2000. Also see Carlyle A. Thayer (July 1999), p. 53.

111. SA-NGUAN Kjumrunroj, "China Warns ASEAN Against Boosting U.S. Military Ties," *The Nation (Thailand)*, March 15, 2000.

dence could indicate plans to intervene in the event of a SCS conflict.”¹¹²

Impact on Chinese Foreign Policy

The timing of China’s interest in the COC is significant. International developments caused Chinese leaders to reconsider their April 1999 opposition to the idea of an ASEAN-China COC. The Chinese calculated that an intransigent attitude on their part would cause ASEAN to form closer military links with the U.S. This would enable the U.S. navy to increase its access to port facilities in Southeast Asia, which would then strengthen the U.S. position in the event of a Taiwan Straits crisis.¹¹³ Hence mitigating U.S. influence on the flanks of Taiwan—such as Southeast Asia—by presenting a more accommodating stance on multilateral negotiations, was perceived as a sensible policy.

During the ASEAN-China PMC in late July 1999, Chinese Foreign Minister TANG Jiaxuan improved atmospherics by pledging China’s willingness to be the first nuclear power to sign the protocol to the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone Treaty.¹¹⁴ However he remained opposed to a multilateral COC, suggesting instead that claimants to the Spratly Islands should subscribe to “general guidelines.”¹¹⁵ This attitude changed by March 2000, when

112. ZHANG Xiusan is professor at Guangzhou Jinan University’s Southeast Asian Studies Center. ZHANG Xiusan, “Nanzhongguohai Wenti de Guoji Yinsu yu Woguo de Duice Lushi,” [International Factors in the South China Sea Dispute and a Discussion and Analysis of China’s Countermeasures], *Dongnanya* [Southeast Asia], No. 2 (2001), p. 19.

113. “Jingti Meiguo Zai Dongnanya de Junshi Cunzai,” [A Warning About America’s Military Presence in Southeast Asia], p. 8.

114. Don PATHAN, “China to Sign SE Asia Nuclear Treaty,” *The Nation* (Thailand), July 27, 1999; Carlyle A. Thayer, “China-ASEAN Relations: Beijing Plans for a Long-Term Partnership and Benefits from Anti-Western Sentiment,” in Pacific Forum, CSIS, *Comparative Connections*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (October 1999), p. 40. Available at <http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/9903q.pdf>.

115. “China Willing to Subscribe to ‘Guidelines’ on Spratly Claims,” *Agence France Presse*, July 27, 1999; Carlyle A. Thayer writes that TANG Jiaxuan “offered to seriously consider a draft code of conduct for claimant states in the South China Sea” at the meeting. However other press reports describe Tang as being adverse to a draft COC. The idea that China agreed to a discussions over draft COCs later on (the first indication came in March 2000, during the ACSOM in Thailand)—after the U.S. sent aircraft carriers to the South China Sea in August 1999, and conducted joint military exercises with the Philippines from January to March 2000—makes more sense in light of this chapter’s thesis that China becomes willing to conduct multilateral negotiations when confronted by perceived U.S. interference or encirclement. See Carlyle A. Thayer (October 1999) for his write-up. For reports on China’s opposition to a draft COC, see Paul

senior officials from China and ASEAN gathered in Thailand for the ACSOM. China proposed its own version of a COC, marking the first ASEAN-China discussion on draft COCs.¹¹⁶ According to SIHASAK Phuangketkaew, deputy director-general of Thailand's East Asia Department, China's tone in this discussion was "dramatically" improved from the July 1999 ASEAN-China PMC.¹¹⁷ That China proposed a COC *after* the U.S. sent aircraft carriers to the SCS in August 1999, and conducted joint military exercises with the Philippines from January to March 2000, lends weight to the argument that China shows flexibility in its reluctance to engage ASEAN multilaterally when confronted by perceived U.S. interference or encirclement.

IX. September 11: Regional Changes

September 11 accelerated the need to diffuse tensions between China and ASEAN. NIU Jun observes that after September 11, the U.S. had increased its economic and military assistance to ASEAN states; and notably, ASEAN states expressed their strong support for Bush's anti-terrorism campaign.¹¹⁸ The U.S. managed to not only expand its military presence, but also establish new basing rights and overflight access in Thailand, persuade Malaysia to set up an anti-terrorism center in Kuala Lumpur, and propose the use of Vietnam's port and airport facilities in Quy Nhan.¹¹⁹ In March 2002, Bush declared Southeast Asia the "second front" in the war on terrorism.¹²⁰ ZHANG Yunling advises that China should provide strong support for ASEAN-led multilateral mechanisms because such mechanisms "are an important way of preventing the U.S.

Jacobs, "Support for Code of Conduct on S. China Sea," *The Straits Times (Singapore)*, July 27, 1999; "China Willing to Subscribe to 'Guidelines' on Spratly Claims," *Agence France Presse*, July 27, 1999; "China Spokeswoman Opposes South China Sea 'Code of Conduct'," *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, July 28, 1999.

116. Busaba SIVASOMBOON, "China, ASEAN Agree to Frame Common Code of Conduct on Spratlys," *Associated Press*, March 15, 2000; Carlyle A. Thayer, "China-ASEAN: Tensions Promote Discussions on a Code of Conduct," in Pacific Forum, CSIS, *Comparative Connections*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (April 2000), p. 40. Available at <http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/0001q.pdf>; Leszek Buszynski, p. 359.

117. SA-NGUAN Kjumrunroj, "China, ASEAN Seal Deal Over Disputed Area," *The Nation (Thailand)*, March 16, 2000.

118. NIU Jun is a professor at Beijing University's School of International Relations. NIU Jun, "Meiguo de Yatai Anquan Zhanlue jiqi Yingxiang," [America's Asia-Pacific Security Strategy and Influence], in Zhang Yunling, chief ed. (2003), p. 98-9.

119. *Ibid.*

120. *Ibid.*

from using its bilateral military relations to deepen its influence in Southeast Asia and encircle China.”¹²¹

X. The Declaration on Code of Conduct

In light of potential U.S. encirclement, China finally signed the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the SCS with ASEAN at the November 2002 ASEAN Plus Three summit in Phnom Penh. The Declaration affirms the freedom of navigation and overflight, and commits the parties to “exercise self-restraint” and resolve disputes “by peaceful means, without resorting to the threat or use of force.”¹²² The Declaration also includes suggestions for cooperative activities, such as marine scientific research and combating transnational crime.¹²³

Exclusions From, and Additions To, the DCOC

What was excluded from the final Declaration however, is instructive. Two items from the 2000 ASEAN draft were missing from the final Declaration. First, the final Declaration makes no mention of the Spratly or Paracel Islands; only a general reference to the SCS. ASEAN’s draft specifically mentions both the Spratly and Paracel Islands,¹²⁴ while the Chinese draft mentions only the “Nansha (Spratly)” Islands.¹²⁵ Vietnam had hoped that an inclusion of the Paracel Islands—which it had occupied before China seized them in 1974—would pave the way for future negotiations. However China refused to accommodate any reference to them. It wanted the DCOC confined only to the Spratlys. As a compromise, the geographical scope of the Declaration was omitted. Second, ASEAN’s draft calls for all parties to “refrain from action of inhabiting or *erecting structures* in presently uninhabited islands, reefs,

121. ZHANG Yunling, in ZHANG Yunling, chief ed. (2003), p. 309.

122. “Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea,” November 4, 2002. Available at <http://www.aseansec.org/13163.htm>.

123. *Ibid.*

124. At Vietnam’s urging, the ASEAN draft included specific mention of the Paracel Islands. “ASEAN Draft: Regional Code of Conduct in the South China Sea,” in Scott Snyder, Brad Glosserman, and Ralph A. Cossa, eds., “Confidence-Building Measures in the South China Sea,” *Issues & Insights*, No. 2-01, Appendix E (August, 2001). Electronic Document obtained from Professor M. Taylor Fravel, March 24, 2006.

125. “China’s Draft: Regional Code of Conduct in the South China Sea,” in Scott Snyder, Brad Glosserman, and Ralph A. Cossa, eds., “Confidence-Building Measures in the South China Sea,” Appendix E.

shoals, cays and other features.”¹²⁶ This prohibition of building new structures under a clause calling for self-restraint had been forwarded by the Philippines, strongly supported by Vietnam, but rejected by China.¹²⁷ The final Declaration thus excludes “erecting structures” and commits states only to “refraining from action of inhabiting on the presently uninhabited islands, reefs, shoals, cays, and other features.”¹²⁸

China’s draft mainly carried general principles and was not as detailed as ASEAN’s. Two details in the Chinese draft however, were omitted from the final Declaration. First, China’s draft had a clause calling upon parties to “refrain from conducting any military exercises directed against other countries in the [Spratly] Islands and their adjacent waters, and from carrying out any dangerous and close-in military (sic). Military patrol activities in the area shall be restricted.”¹²⁹ That China had this clause inserted into its draft highlights the depth of Beijing’s concern about U.S. naval activity in the SCS and involvement in China’s territorial disputes. ASEAN refused to accede to such severe restrictions on their military. The compromise in the Declaration was that parties should be “notifying, on a voluntary basis, other Parties concerned of any impending joint/combined military exercise.”¹³⁰ Second, China’s draft maintains its long-standing policy of negotiating resolutions through bilateral channels. It made no mention of the word “multilateral,” specifically asserting that “disputes relating to the [Spratly] Islands shall be resolved by the sovereign states directly concerned through *bilateral* friendly consultations and negotiations.”¹³¹ On this issue, the Declaration does not restrict dispute resolution to bilateral means. It follows the ASEAN draft word for word, making room for both bilateralism and multilateralism: “The modalities, scope and locations, in respect of bilateral and multilateral cooperation

126. Emphasis added. Clause 2 in “ASEAN Draft: Regional Code of Conduct in the South China Sea,” in Scott Snyder, Brad Glosserman, and Ralph A. Cossa, Appendix E.

127. For the Philippine’s proposal to ban the erection of structures, see Leszek Buszynski, p. 356. For Vietnam’s support of the Philippine’s proposal, see “Still a Sea of Troubles,” *The Economist*, November 9, 2002.

128. Clause 5 in “Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea.”

129. Clause 9 in “China Draft: Regional Code of Conduct in the South China Sea.” Though the draft makes no mention of non-signatories, China’s reference to “military exercises” was understood to be targeted at the U.S.

130. Clause 5c in “Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea.”

131. Emphasis added. Clause 4 in “China Draft: Regional Code of Conduct in the South China Sea.”

should be agreed upon by the Parties concerned prior to their actual implementation.”¹³²

Additions to the Declaration are also instructive. ASEAN wanted the final clause of the Declaration to state that the parties would work towards a formal Code of Conduct. China however, was reluctant to commit itself to legality and demanded that to have the phrase “on the basis of consensus” added to that final clause.¹³³

Both non-PRC and PRC analysts use the DCOC as evidence of China exercising self-restraint, even self-sacrifice. M. Taylor Fravel and Evan Medeiros argue that the final Declaration was closer to the ASEAN document than to China’s.¹³⁴ Similarly, ZHANG Yunling and TANG Shiping argue that China “basically let ASEAN states set the norms governing the SCS dispute.”¹³⁵

However a closer inspection reveals that these analysts’ claim gives too much credit to China for making compromises. Fravel and Medeiros base their argument on the fact that the final DCOC had “little of what was offered by China,” but this is not surprising, given that the Chinese draft had little substance in the first place. The formal wording—sentence structure, word usage etc—of the final DCOC does fit more closely to the ASEAN draft. On issues of substance, however, the ASEAN’s position was more compromised than that of China’s. As this chapter has tried to show above, China managed to avoid committing itself to future negotiations on the sovereignty of territory—the Paracel Islands—that it had control over; refused to promise that it was not going to erect structures in future—an indication that it might harbor intentions to erect new

132. Clause 6 in “Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea,” and clause 5 in “ASEAN Draft: Regional Code of Conduct in the South China Sea.”

133. “Progress made on SEA Code of Conduct Pact,” *Business Times*, November 2, 2002.

134. Evan S. Medeiros and M. Taylor Fravel, “China’s New Diplomacy,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 6 (November/December 2003). See also Avery Goldstein, “Power Transitions, Institutions, and China’s Rise in East Asia: Theoretical Expectations and Evidence,” June 2004. Electronic document obtained from Avery Goldstein.

135. ZHANG Yunling and TANG Shiping, “Zhongguo de Diqu Zhanlue,” [China’s Regional Strategy], *Shijie Jingji yu Zhengzhi* [World Economics and Politics], No. 6 (2004), p. 10. It is interesting to note that the English version of this article, printed by University of California Press and therefore more targeted at a Western audience, states that China made “significant concessions despite strong domestic opposition,”—a statement that is conspicuously absent in the Chinese version. For the English version, see ZHANG Yunling and TANG Shiping, “China’s Regional Strategy,” in David Shambaugh, ed., *Power Shift: China and Asia’s New Dynamic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 50.

structures to strengthen its military presence in the SCS,¹³⁶ and escaped from making an agreement to legalize the Declaration in future. The concessions that it had to make were negligible: Beijing probably did not expect regional actors to agree to a restriction of military exercises, and could easily afford to have the phrase “multilateral cooperation” inserted into the final document since China claims de facto veto power over multilateral negotiations.

XI. Debunking Learning

A number of analysts have used China’s agreement to the DCOC as evidence for the argument that China’s cooperative behavior can be explained by a process of being socialized into ASEAN’s norms of restraint and dialogue-building.¹³⁷ This chapter however, casts doubt on such an argument. First, the pattern outlined above shows that increases in Chinese cooperativeness came after external changes. A socialization argument on the other hand, would predict that increases would be relatively gradual and consistent. Second, a learning/socialization argument gives too much credit to ASEAN. To many Chinese analysts, ASEAN is neither sufficiently cohesive nor strong enough to produce a unified foreign policy.¹³⁸ Even a unified ASEAN does not have enough agency to push China into taking up multilateralism: though ASEAN was unified in its opposition to China’s seizure of Mischief Reef in 1995, China did not bother to reassure it multilaterally until it started worrying about the possibility of U.S. interference in the matter. As a result, China has been able to exploit intra-ASEAN frictions and disagreements to keep delaying multilateral solutions and buy time to secure bilateral arrangements under which China will have more negotiating leverage. Third, China’s position in 2002 was little changed compared to that in 1995. Signing onto the DCOC was perfectly consistent with the Chinese policy of “setting aside the sovereignty issue and concentrating on joint development,” a policy which harked back to the Deng era. For Beijing, “joint development” was premised on Chinese sovereignty over the SCS, and thus

136. Remarks by an unnamed ASEAN official, in “Progress made on SEA Code of Conduct Pact,” *Business Times*, November 2, 2002.

137. For example, see Alice D. Ba, “Who’s Socializing Whom? Complex Engagement in Sino-ASEAN Relations,” *Pacific Review*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (June 2006), p. 163.

138. Nan LI, “The Evolving Chinese Conception of Security and Security Approaches,” in See Seng TAN and Amitav ACHARYA, eds., *Asia-Pacific Security Cooperation: National Interests and Regional Order* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe) p. 66.

meant foreign participation in the exploration of China's resources.¹³⁹

The barriers to learning are high—China has little incentive to make any sovereignty compromises on the SCS dispute. First, the benefits of maintaining the claim to sovereignty are numerous. The SCS straddles key lines of communications and has rich deposits of oil and natural gas, which China has become increasingly dependent upon to sustain its rapid economic growth. Second, the costs of maintaining the claim to sovereignty are low. Unlike China's land disputes, offshore island disputes are far from the mainland and relatively cheap to contest.¹⁴⁰ Offshore islands do not have people living on them (always a sensitive issue), leaders do not have to devote large numbers of troops to stake their claims, and their distance from the mainland suggests that only international shocks, not domestic ones, will create incentives for leaders to compromise. Since neither the U.S. nor ASEAN states have mounted a concerted military opposition to Chinese claims, China has every interest in delaying a settlement of the dispute.

XII. Should the U.S. Worry About China's Tactical Use of Multilateral Diplomacy?

China's refusal to commit more fully to a legal COC has been cited as evidence that it is using multilateral mechanisms as a tactic to defuse tensions while it builds up its navy and military strength to be able to project power into the region. Michael Swaine and Ashley J. Tellis for example, suggest that China's approach aims at delaying the dispute until the balance of power shifts in favor of China, during which it may usurp and coerce ASEAN states into giving way to Beijing.¹⁴¹

Indeed, publicly available materials indicate that China has no intention to surrender its sovereignty over the islands. According to HOU Songling, China decided to agree on joint development because it calculated that it cannot militarily support its claim of sov-

139. XIAO Bing and QING Po, *Zhongguo Jundui Nengfou Daying Xia Yichang Zhanzheng* [Can the Chinese Military Win the Next War?] (Chongqing Northwest Normal University Press, 1993).

140. M. Taylor Fravel, "The Long March to Peace: Explaining China's Settlement of Territorial Disputes," PhD. dissertation submitted to the Department of Political Science, Stanford University (November 2003), p. 366.

141. Michael D. Swaine and Ashley J. Tellis, *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy: Past, Present & Future* (Santa Monica, CA, USA: The Rand Corporation, 2000), p. 132.

ereignty over the SCS.¹⁴² Similarly, LIANG Shoude suggests that China's eschewal of force is born out of constrained choice in his statement, "Take the sovereignty of the Nansha islands (Spratlys) for example, we would never get the best results by taking a tough position."¹⁴³ Chinese analysts are aware that the SCS dispute is a long-term problem which will not be resolved soon. As TANG Jianguo notes, "ASEAN will continue to strengthen relations with the U.S. and depend on U.S. power to restrict China's activities in the SCS. This is the unavoidable reality for China's relations with ASEAN."¹⁴⁴ Although China and ASEAN countries have held talks over the dispute, these involved either crisis management or joint development.¹⁴⁵ China has never offered to participate in negotiations over sovereignty.¹⁴⁶

However, thus far there has been insufficient evidence to support the idea that China intends to build power at home to coerce states in future, even though this chapter has argued that China has tactically used multilateralism to ward off the possibility of a U.S.-led encirclement campaign. That is, the available evidence suggests that China's tactical use of multilateralism has largely been defensive and not offensive.

By asserting its sovereignty and using diplomacy for its own interests, China is not behaving unlike other ASEAN states.¹⁴⁷ In fact, since the Mischief Reef incident in 1995, China's behavior can be described as being almost docile when compared to that of other claimants.¹⁴⁸ Other claimant states have used military means to strengthen their hold on the SCS. Disputes have occurred between Vietnam and the Philippines, Philippines and Malaysia, and Malaysia and Vietnam.¹⁴⁹ In March 1999, Malaysia built facilities on Boji

142. HOU Songling, p. 69.

143. LIU Di, "Deng Xiaoping's Thinking on Diplomatic Work and China's Diplomatic Policy—Interview with Liang Shoude, Dean for College of International Relations for Beijing University," November 2, 1997, in FBIS-CHI-97-310.

144. TANG Jianguo, p. 62.

145. M. Taylor Fravel, p. 403.

146. Interviews with Southeast Asian officials and academics, June 2005 and January 2006.

147. Alastair Iain Johnston, "Beijing's Security Behavior in the Asia-Pacific: Is China a Dissatisfied Power?," in J.J. Suh, Peter J. Katzenstein, and Allen Carlson, eds., *Rethinking Security in East Asia* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 51.

148. Interview with ASEAN Ministry of Foreign Affairs official, January 2006. Interview with M. Taylor Fravel, March 2006.

149. For disputes between the Philippines and Malaysia, see "Editorial: South China Sea Games Are Getting Dangerous," *The Nation (Thailand)*, June 24, 1999.

Reef and Yuya shoals in the Spratly Islands, which are also claimed by the Philippines and China.¹⁵⁰ In August 2002, Vietnamese troops based on an islet fired warning shots at Philippine military planes.¹⁵¹ Non-military means have also been used to consolidate individual control. In May 2004, the Vietnamese defense ministry started rebuilding a runway on Truong Sa Lon (Large Spratly), an island its military occupies in the Spratly archipelago, in order to send Vietnamese tourists to the SCS.¹⁵²

There are some indications that tactical multilateral diplomacy has a constraining effect on the range of options open to Beijing. Since signing onto the DCOC, China has made a concerted effort to adhere to its spirit. Though the DCOC is not legally binding, the reputational costs of noncompliance are potentially high. The fact that China went through great pains to ensure that the document was worded in a way that did not undermine its interests shows that Beijing does not make agreements—legal or not—lightly.

While there is insufficient evidence to show that China is using multilateralism to bide its time until it has built the capabilities to coerce other states, neither is there sufficient evidence to guarantee that it will not do so in the near future. In short, the available evidence remains inconclusive. What is relevant for the purposes of this study however, is the observation that Chinese cooperativeness increases when Beijing perceives that regional alliance patterns are changing in ways that have the potential to “contain” China. With this in mind, U.S. policy-makers can channel Chinese efforts into cooperative schemes—thereby limiting China’s ability to turn revisionist—by maintaining strong relations with countries around China’s periphery.

150. “FM Spokeswoman Says that Nansha Islands Sovereignty Indisputable,” *Xinhua News Agency*, June 29, 1999.

151. “Vietnamese Forces Fire at PAF Planes Patrolling Spratlys,” *Business World (Philippines)*, September 5, 2002.

152. “Vietnam Renovates Airport in Disputed Spratly Islands,” *Agence France Presse*, May 14, 2002.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM

Chapter two showed that China's anxiety over a possible U.S. encirclement agenda was the primary reason for greater Chinese willingness to conduct multilateral talks with ASEAN over territorial disputes. This chapter augments that argument by tracing China's evolving diplomacy in the ARF. It finds that sharp increases in China's interest in the forum come after the strengthening of U.S. alliances in the region.

Because the ARF covers a much broader range of security issues compared to ASEAN-China discussions on the SCS dispute however, it provides more room for China to exercise its diplomacy and is useful in illuminating other factors that may have a causal role in explaining China's tighter embrace of security multilateralism in recent years. Sensitivity to regional perceptions of China's actions has had a role in shaping China's multilateral policy. Apart from hedging against U.S. encirclement, China's interest in multilateral diplomacy in the 21st century is simultaneously being driven by its self-confidence in actively forging a regional order that will be conducive to its rise.

I. Initial Wariness

China was highly suspicious of the ARF due to several reasons when the idea of establishing an Asia-Pacific security forum was first promulgated. First, Beijing was afraid that a new multilateral mechanism would be dominated by Washington and serve as a conduit for the U.S. and other actors to criticize China's policies and constrain its behavior.¹⁵³ These include issues such as China's military spending and human rights record. In particular, Chinese leaders were loathe to having Taiwan—considered a sovereign, internal issue—discussed in a regional forum. China would be outnumbered in such situations. Second, such forums could “internationalize [*guojihua*]” the sensitive bilateral disputes in which China had bar-

153. Rosemary Foot, “China in the ASEAN Regional Forum: Organizational Processes and Domestic Modes of Thought,” *Asian Survey*, Vol. 38, No. 5 (May 1998), p. 426. See also Banning Garrett and Bonnie Glaser, “Multilateral Security in the Asia-Pacific Region and its Impact on Chinese Interests: Views from Beijing,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (June 1994), p. 25-6; Avery Goldstein (2005), p. 120; Alastair Iain Johnston (2003), p. 127; KUIK Cheng-Chwee, “Multilateralism in China's ASEAN Policy: Its Evolution, Aspirations, and Characteristics,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (April 2005), p. 106.

gaining power, thus severely limiting the Party's foreign policy.¹⁵⁴ As GUO Zhenyuan points out, China believes that bilateral problems should be resolved bilaterally. Multilateral frameworks would only complicate matters and make resolution more difficult.¹⁵⁵ Chinese analysts were worried that the U.S. might take the opportunity to arbitrate the SCS dispute China had with a number of ASEAN countries, or that ASEAN countries might use the forum to drag the U.S. into the dispute even if the U.S. was not interested in being involved.¹⁵⁶ Others saw regional multilateralism as a covert means of strengthening U.S. interests in East Asia and containing China after the end of the Cold War.¹⁵⁷

In spite of its wariness, Beijing decided to join the ARF in 1993. A report by the Institute of Asia Pacific Studies (IAPS), a department of the influential Chinese think tank, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), reveals that Beijing's decision was born out of a careful calculation of the strategic benefits and costs of participation. According to the report, China had to participate in multilateral processes because the development of cooperative security mechanisms in the Asia-Pacific was a trend that could not be halted.¹⁵⁸ Non-participation would only result in isolation and raise regional suspicions of China's intentions.¹⁵⁹ This had to be avoided so that China could continue to cultivate close ties with its neighbors and maintain a stable regional environment conducive to

154. TANG Pingshan, "Luetan Dongmeng Diqu Luntan," [A Summary and Discussion of the ASEAN Regional Forum], *Dangdai Yatai* [Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies], No. 6 (1994), p. 47; Alastair Iain Johnston (2003), p.127.

155. GUO Zhenyuan, [The Main Problems Affecting the Security in the Asia-Pacific and the Principles Governing the Establishment of a Security Mechanism in the Region], *Guoji Wenti* [International Review], No. 1 (1994), p. 53-4.

156. YAN Yang and CHU Dao, "Yatai Diqu Anquan Wenti ji Gefangmian de Jiben Taidu," [The Security Problems in the Asia-Pacific Region and the Basic Attitudes of Parties Concerned], *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi* [Contemporary International Relations], No. 7 (1994), p. 7; Michael Leifer, "The ASEAN Regional Forum: Extending ASEAN's Model of Regional Security," *Adelphi Paper*, No. 302 (Oxford: Oxford University Press for IISS, 1996), p. 26-7.

157. FANG Changping, "Duobian Zhuyi yu Zhongguo Zhoubian Anquan Zhanlue," [Multilateralism and China's Peripheral Security Strategy], p. 48. Hongying WANG, "Multilateralism in Chinese Foreign Policy: The Limits of Socialization," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (May-June 2000), p. 483.

158. Task Force on Situational Analysis, ZHANG Yunling (Head), WEI Yanshen, GAO Lianfu, LI Xiangwen, ZHOU Xiaobin, and LU Jianren, Institute of Asia Pacific Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, "Yatai Xingshi Fenxi," [An Analysis of the Asia-Pacific Situation in 1994], *Dangdai Yatai* [Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies], No. 1 (1995), p. 16.

159. *Ibid.*

economic development.¹⁶⁰ The report cautions that Beijing cannot stop the U.S. from leading the ARF, and recommends that China should join the forum and shape its development from within to ensure that its interests would not be undermined.¹⁶¹

In addition, Beijing also believed that as a great power it ought to be included and consulted in forums that discuss issues of regional importance.¹⁶² Participation in the ARF would also be an opportunity to improve relations with ASEAN and promote international multipolarity.

As such, China participated in the ARF with the aim of guarding against any measures that might develop the ARF into an institution capable of infringing upon its sovereignty. In 1994, China asserted that the ARF should only develop at a pace “comfortable to all participants”—that is, slowly, with non-binding, voluntary agreements.¹⁶³ In its proposal for the first meeting of the ARF held at Bangkok in July 1994, Beijing remained firmly fastened on state-centric norms of sovereignty, declaring that ARF participants had to adhere to principles of “mutual respect for sovereignty [and] non-interference in each other’s internal affairs” for progress to be made.¹⁶⁴ It emphasized that “the Chinese government is always opposed to internationalizing the question of Nansha (Spratly) Islands.”¹⁶⁵ The proposal clearly reflects Beijing’s wariness of institutionalization of the forum:

The Chinese side prefers to see [the ARF] remain a forum, whose function should not go beyond exchanging information and views among participants. The forum should not make decision or take action against any specific country, region or issue. When a need arises for making press releases or issuing documents, the wishes of all region’s countries should be respected and the principle of consensus be followed.¹⁶⁶

At the 1995 ARF meeting, Chinese Foreign Minister QIAN Qichen again cautioned that the “purposes and goals of the Forum should reflect the region’s diversity as well as the new features of

160. *Ibid.*

161. *Ibid.*

162. Avery Goldstein (2005), p. 119.

163. Rosemary Foot (1998), p. 428.

164. “Proposal by China on the First Meeting of ASEAN Regional Forum,” April 4, 1994. Electronic document acquired from Alastair Iain Johnston.

165. *Ibid.*

166. *Ibid.*

the post-Cold War world scene, instead of mechanically copying tile models of other regions or of the past.”¹⁶⁷ When ARF participants discussed the ARF Concept Paper outlining the goals and future developments of the forum, China objected to the proposal for developing mechanisms for conflict resolution. It argued that the ARF should be a dialogue forum [*duihua luntan*].¹⁶⁸ The proposal was thus changed from “the development of conflict resolution mechanisms” to “the elaboration of approaches to conflict resolution.”¹⁶⁹ China also opposed the formation of “intersessional working groups,” fearful that the term implied institutionalization of the work of the ARF. These bodies were then termed “intersessional support groups” (ISGs) and “intersessional meetings” (ISMs) to provide a more passive overtone.¹⁷⁰ China’s unease with multilateral mechanisms was also reflected in the way Chinese participants conducted their diplomacy. Chinese participants in the ARF often seemed “uncomfortable, stiff and wooden,” read prepared texts, and referred to them when fielding questions.¹⁷¹

II. China’s Changing Attitude towards Security Multilateralism

China’s attitude towards multilateral security cooperation shifted in 1996. At the July 1996 ARF, China surprised participants by offering to co-chair an ISG on CBMs with the Philippines in March 1997.¹⁷² Chinese Foreign Minister QIAN Qichen also appealed for the first time for the cultivation of “a new approach to security.”¹⁷³

By late 1996, Chinese officials involved in the ARF began forwarding concepts that were “in tension with traditional realpolitik

167. “Statement by H.E. QIAN Qichen,” August 1, 1995. Electronic document obtained from Alastair Iain Johnston.

168. KUIK Cheng-Chwee (2005), p. 107.

169. Alastair Iain Johnston, “The Myth of the ASEAN Way? Explaining the Evolution of the ASEAN Regional Forum,” in Helga Haftendorn, Robert O. Keohane, and Celeste A. Wallander, eds., *Imperfect Unions: Security Institutions over Time and Space*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Rosemary Foot (1998), p. 427.

170. Rosemary Foot (1998), p. 432.

171. Alastair Iain Johnston and Paul Evans, p. 258; Susan L. Shirk, “Chinese Views on Asia-Pacific Regional Security Cooperation,” *National Bureau Asian Research Analysis*, Vol. 5, No. 5 (December 1994), p. 7. Available at <http://www.nbr.org/publications/analysis/pdf/vol5no5.pdf>.

172. Alastair Iain Johnston (2003), p. 134.

173. XU Xin (2003), p. 17; “Chinese Foreign Minister Addresses Regional Forum,” *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, July 25, 1996.

arguments.”¹⁷⁴ SHI Chunlai, a former Ambassador to India and Australia and a key figure in China’s CSCAP delegation, seems to be China’s first participant in ARF-related activities to promulgate the term “common security.”¹⁷⁵ In a paper presented at the ARF workshop on preventative diplomacy, Shi and co-author XU Jian argued that common security was critical for abandoning “old” security concepts that were “based on the dangerous game of balance of power.”¹⁷⁶ Nevertheless, the paper also stressed that preventative diplomacy should strictly be in accordance with the five principles of peaceful co-existence.¹⁷⁷ This comment itself is “somewhat in tension with common security,”¹⁷⁸ reflecting the embryonic nature of the multilateral security discourse in China.

In January 1997, ARF-involved Chinese analysts unofficially proposed a concept of “mutual security [*huxiang anquan*]” at the first Canada-China Seminar on Asia-Pacific Multilateralism and Cooperative Security (CANCHIS) in Toronto, Canada.¹⁷⁹ According to a Chinese participant, “mutual security” meant that “for you to be secure, your neighbor had to be secure”—a security concept based on the Chinese notion of win-win.¹⁸⁰ However the tentativeness of this early venture into multilateral concepts can be seen by the weight Chinese participants placed on state sovereignty. According to a Chinese participant, “mutual security” must begin with the recognition that “all countries involved are on an equal footing and enjoy the same rights to the maintenance of their respective national security.”¹⁸¹

China co-hosted the ISG on CBMs with the Philippines in March 1997 in Beijing, the “first time for China to host an official multilateral international conference on security issues.”¹⁸² How-

174. Alastair Iain Johnston (2003), p. 127, referring to SHI Chunlai and XU Jian, “Preventative Diplomacy Pertinent to the Asia-Pacific Region,” *International Review* (China Center for International Studies), No. 4 (July 1997).

175. *Ibid.*

176. *Ibid.*

177. *Ibid.*

178. *Ibid.*

179. *Ibid.* Interview with Paul Evans, January 2006. See also David H. Capie, Paul M. Evans and Akiko Fukushima, *Speaking Asia Pacific Security: A Lexicon of English Terms with Chinese and Japanese Translations* (Toronto: University of Toronto-York University Joint Centre for Asia Pacific Studies, 1998), p. 63.

180. Alastair Iain Johnston (2003), p. 128.

181. David H. Capie et. al., p. 63.

182. “Chinese Foreign Minister Addresses Regional Forum,” *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, July 25, 1996. Iain Johnston estimates that this was the first time that

ever at this time terms like “mutual security” and “new security concept” were still underdeveloped ideas in Chinese foreign policy. The Asia Department of MOFA thus commissioned CASS to examine concepts related to regional security.¹⁸³ CASS submitted its report to MOFA in December 1998.¹⁸⁴ The report argues that “China can no longer protect its national security by solely or overly depending on the strengthening of its military power.”¹⁸⁵ Protecting national security “not only requires increasing military power, but also developing diplomatic ties and multilateral cooperation.”¹⁸⁶ This is because China is increasingly being challenged by non-traditional security problems such as economic and financial instability, transnational crimes and environmental degradation.¹⁸⁷

Second, China’s rising power is a cause for worry among neighboring countries.¹⁸⁸ As a result, these countries are increasing their military expenditure and strengthening their alliances.¹⁸⁹ It warns that by being overly dependent on strengthening its military, China “may spark a military arms race, which can then escalate into dangerous power-balancing.”¹⁹⁰ The report concludes with an exhortation to embrace multilateralism:

Vigorously promoting multilateral security cooperation can not only advance China’s interests in the Asia-Pacific, but also create a peaceful and stable regional environment. In addition, China will be able to exhibit its ability to be a responsible great power in the region, and cultivate a positive image of itself. This will decrease the anxieties other countries have over the “China threat.”¹⁹¹

Iain Johnston notes that with the CASS report submitted to the Asia Department, “the Chinese discourse on multilateralism, then, has moved quite some distance from public skepticism to informal

such game-theoretic terminology had been used by China in a regional multilateral forum.

183. *Ibid.*

184. *Ibid.* The report was printed in CASS’s journal, *Dangdai Yatai* [Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies], as ZHANG Yunling, “Zonghe Anquanguan ji dui Woguo Anquan de Sikao,” [The Comprehensive Security Concept and Reflections on Our Nation’s Security], in *Dangdai Yatai* [Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies], No. 1 (2000).

185. ZHANG Yunling (2000), p. 6.

186. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

187. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

188. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

189. *Ibid.*

190. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

191. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

articulations of mutual security and common security, to public affirmation of the concepts.”¹⁹²

President JIANG Zemin’s report to the fifteenth CCP Party Congress in September 1997 placed a new emphasis on multilateral diplomacy. The report asserts that China “should take an active part in multilateral diplomatic activities and give full play to China’s role in the United Nations and other international organizations.”¹⁹³ According to LIANG Shoude, Dean of the College of International Relations of Beijing University, Jiang’s report was China’s first public declaration of its support for multilateral activities, thus officially marking a major shift in Chinese diplomacy.¹⁹⁴

At the July 1998 ARF meeting in Manila, Chinese Foreign Minister TANG Jiaxuan called for “a new security approach” that would “enhance mutual understanding and trust through dialogue and cooperation” as “a practical way of ensuring peace and security.”¹⁹⁵ During the same month, Beijing released “China’s National Defense,” a report that emulates efforts by regional countries to provide transparency by publishing defense White Papers. Although the White Paper does not reveal anything particularly new about China’s defense policy, its emphasis on cooperation between states is striking.¹⁹⁶ In particular, it articulates a “new security concept” (NSC)—first unveiled by then-Foreign Minister QIAN Qichen in December 1997 at the 30th anniversary of ASEAN’s founding—for international politics, defining it to include the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence, economic cooperation, dialogue, and peaceful settlement of disputes between states. The 1998 White Paper thus reflects a new line of thinking in Beijing that departs from a purely self-help approach to security.

192. Alastair Iain Johnston (2003), p. 131.

193. “Jiang Zemin’s Report at the 15th National Congress of the Communist Party of China,” September 12, 1997. Available at <http://www.fas.org/news/china/1997/970912-prc.htm>.

194. LIU Di, “Deng Xiaoping’s Thinking on Diplomatic Work and China’s Diplomatic Policy—Interview with Liang Shoude, Dean for College of International Relations for Beijing University,” November 2, 1997, FBIS-CHI-97-310.

195. “China Calls for New Security Approach,” *Xinhua General News Service*, July 27, 1998.

196. For example, in China’s previous White Paper (on arms control and disarmament) published in 1995, the words “cooperation” and “dialogue” are used fourteen times and twice respectively; while in the 1998 White Paper they are used forty-four and fourteen times respectively. See “China: Arms Control and Disarmament,” Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China (November 1995). Available at <http://www.nti.org/db/china/engdocs/whteppr.htm>.

China's interest in multilateral institutions is further reflected in the institutional changes that have occurred since its strategic decision in the late 1990s. When China first joined the ARF, no division within the Asia department of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs had the appropriate resources to cope with the demands of a multilateral regional forum. Since the ARF did not fit into the country-desk and sub-region structure of the Asia department, it was relegated to the "catch-all" Comprehensive Division [*Zonghe Chu*].¹⁹⁷ However in January 1998 the Asia Department set up a separate division, the Regional Cooperation Division [*Diqu Hezuo Chu*] to handle ARF and Track II diplomacy. China's participation has also led to a "deliberate seeking out of new expertise and ideas" so that China can play an active and professional part in the ARF.¹⁹⁸ For example, in 1997, the Asia department of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs started sending its officials and academics to the Joint Center for Asia-Pacific Studies in Toronto, Canada for the annual "Canada-China seminar on Asia-Pacific Multilateralism and Cooperative Security" (CANCHIS).¹⁹⁹ Part policy dialogue, part joint training session on central concepts and issues in regional security discussions, the seminar is an example of the resolve and determination the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs has in training its officials in the language, style, and content of regional multilateralism. As a Canadian diplomat observes, "The Chinese are very well-organized. When they made the decision to take on multilateralism in 1997, they were very serious in training people for it."²⁰⁰

III. Explaining China's Attitude Change

Socialization

Iain Johnston attributes China's increasing comfort level with multilateralism to the socialization of key Chinese officials into norms of cooperative security.²⁰¹ Central to Johnston's approach is the premise that actors entering a social interaction rarely emerge

197. Alastair Iain Johnston, "The Myth of the ASEAN Way?" p. 321; KUIK Cheng-Chwee, "China's Evolving Multilateralism in Asia: The *Assenpolitik* and *Innenpolitik* Explanations." Electronic Document obtained from Kuik Cheng-Chwee, p. 3.

198. Rosemary Foot (1998), p. 428.

199. Interview with Paul Evans. Paul Evans, the former director of the Joint Centre for Asia Pacific Studies, organized and conducted the training sessions.

200. *Ibid.*

201. Alastair Iain Johnston (2003), p. 133-34.

the same.²⁰² He finds that the Chinese most directly exposed to intense social interactions with individuals or groups that are strong advocates of security dialogues are more likely to take a positive attitude towards multilateralism than those who are not exposed.²⁰³ The idea is that participation in the ARF—a “counter-realpolitik” social environment conducive to social persuasion—has caused the group of policy-makers most involved in ARF processes to absorb the ARF’s discourse on multilateral cooperation.²⁰⁴ This group now sees multilateralism as compatible with China’s security interests because multilateralism is “good” for regional stability.²⁰⁵

While the internalization of multilateral norms by key actors in the Chinese foreign policy-making process can account for China’s increasing comfort level with the ARF over time, it does not sufficiently explain why Beijing made the unexpected turn towards multilateralism and ideas of mutual security in 1996/1997. If the absorption of the ARF’s mutual security discourse is the sole explanation for changes in Chinese diplomacy, one would expect that acceptance would have been more gradual. One would have little reason to expect Beijing’s sudden (albeit still limited) support for cooperative security by 1996 since socialization requires a significant amount of interaction time before a target’s mindset changes. The amount of interaction between Chinese officials and their ARF counterparts does not seem considerable enough to warrant the sudden shift. Between China’s first foray into the ARF in July 1994 and the July 1996 ARF, there were only five Track I activities: two ARF meetings and three ISMs.²⁰⁶

Even if the ARF was successful in socializing Chinese individuals into the norms of cooperative diplomacy, it is unlikely that this group of proto-multilateralists had enough domestic political power to inspire Beijing’s strategic decision to accept multilateralism by 1996/1997. Thomas Christensen observes that the emergence of Chinese discourse on multilateralism was limited to a small group of believers in the mid-1990s.²⁰⁷ These new thinkers were too few in number and too mistrusted by other more conservative sections of

202. Alastair Iain Johnston, “Treating International Institutions as a Social Environment,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (December 2001), p. 487.

203. Alastair Iain Johnston (2003), p. 139.

204. *Ibid.*, p. 132.

205. *Ibid.*

206. Number of meetings collated from the ASEAN Regional Forum website, at <http://www.aseanregionalforum.org/Default.aspx?tabid=44>.

207. Thomas J. Christensen (1999), p. 246.

the government, such as the PLA, to have been the primary factor in channeling the Chinese government's efforts into participating in regional multilateral forums.²⁰⁸ In fact, the Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry [*waijiaobu*] was so marginalized by other sections of the government that it was often referred to as the "selling-out-the-country ministry [*maiguobu*]." ²⁰⁹ That the majority of Chinese elites during the mid-1990s viewed attempts to pursue multilateralism as imprudent, even traitorous, suggests that short of extremely compelling reasons (which will be discussed below), the proto-multilateralists would have been hard pressed to sell their agenda to the majority of Chinese elites.

While Johnston examines how the ARF as a social environment has influenced Chinese actors, other analysts single out ASEAN's role. Rosemary Foot attributes Beijing's positive appraisal of the ARF to ASEAN's efforts in allaying China's suspicions of the organization.²¹⁰ Alice Ba argues that "special credit" must be given to ASEAN for signaling to China that participation in multilateral forums was not against Chinese interests.²¹¹ Indeed it was after interacting with ARF participants that China realized that the U.S. was not going to drive the ARF's agenda.²¹² However, while ASEAN's efforts at reassurance can explain why Chinese participants became more comfortable with the ARF, they do not explain why Beijing would actively seek to co-chair a multilateral meeting, formulate its own definition of "mutual security" or forward a NSC. After all, given China's deep wariness of multilateral organizations, and given that the ARF does not require its participants to take initiative, ASEAN's reassurances should, at most, prevent the Chinese from blocking further developments in the ARF. Taken alone, they should not be sufficient in spurring Beijing to embark upon its strategic shift in 1996/1997.

208. *Ibid.*

209. *Ibid.* Personal conversation with Thomas Christensen, March 2006.

210. Rosemary Foot (1998), p. 428.

211. Alice D. Ba, (2006), p. 163.

212. Interview with Chinese analyst, January 2006. See also CHEN Zhiming, "Dongmeng Diqu Luntan Pingyi," [An Appraisal of the ARF] *Dongnanya Yanjiu* [Southeast Asian Studies], No. 6 (1998), p. 37; DING Kuisong, "Dongmeng Diqu Luntan yu Yatai Anquan Hezuo," [The ARF and Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific], *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi* [Contemporary International Relations], No. (1998), p. 11. CHEN Zhiming is a professor at Beijing University's School of International Studies; DING Kuisong is Vice-Chairman of the China Reform Forum.

Hedging Against Potential U.S. Encirclement

Placing China's participation in the ARF into the broader context of the strategic realignments taking place in the region during the mid-1990s suggests that China's more active stance from late 1996 onwards was primarily driven by two calculations: to reduce other states' threat perceptions of China, and to reduce the perceived security threats China faced from the strengthening of U.S. bilateral alliances. It is striking to note that China ratcheted up its discourse on multilateral security cooperation in late 1996, *after* perceptions of China as a threat increased due to Chinese assertiveness in the 1995 Mischief Reef incident and the 1995/1996 Taiwan Straits crisis, and after the U.S. and its allies strengthened their bilateral alliances, exemplified by the December 1995 Indonesia-Australia military defense agreement, the April 1996 Clinton-Hashimoto Joint Declaration, and the July 1996 U.S.-Australia Declaration. That China's activism in the context of the ARF coincided with greater cooperativeness in other areas, such as in negotiations with ASEAN over the SCS dispute, and in Central Asia—where arguably the ASEAN Way does not operate—gives greater credence to the argument that China's changed posture was fundamentally a strategic move rather than the outcome of a socialization process.

Beijing hoped to refute the "China threat theory" that had gained resonance due to its assertiveness in the mid-1990s. Yong DENG explains that Chinese elites are worried that China's negative reputation will exacerbate the security dilemma and create an unstable regional environment that derails Beijing's development path.²¹³ Espousing China's commitment to multilateral security cooperation and demonstrating its willingness to be tied by multilateral organizations would build trust and reassure its neighbors.²¹⁴ As WANG Gungwu explains,

[China] knows enough history to fear that a power further away, like the United States, could invoke a "China

213. Yong DENG, "Reputation and the Security Dilemma: China Reacts to the 'China Threat Theory,'" in Alastair Iain Johnston and Robert Ross, eds., *New Approaches to China's Foreign Relations: Essays in Honor of Allen S. Whiting* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, forthcoming). Electronic document obtained from Thomas Christensen.

214. This point is reiterated by many Chinese analysts. See FANG Changping, p. 51; XIAO Huanrong, "Zhongguo de Daguo Zeren yu Diqu Zhuyi Zhanlue," [China's Great Power Responsibility and Regionalism Strategy], *Shijie Jingji yu Zhengzhi* [World Economics and Politics], No. 1 (2003), p. 49.

threat" scenario to instigate a hostile alliance in the region against China. It seems to me that, under the circumstances, it would be sheer stupidity for China to provide any power with that excuse to disrupt China's own developmental and survival agenda.²¹⁵

Using China's support for multilateral mechanisms to refute the "China threat theory" was a salient theme at the inaugural China International Study Forum on "Multilateralism and Chinese Diplomacy" held in Beijing in June 2005.²¹⁶ According to Chinese analyst YUE Xiaoyong, "enthusiastic participation in various multilateral arrangements can relieve the apprehensions that other countries, particularly certain hegemonic ones, have of us, and decrease the strength of the 'China threat theory'."²¹⁷ In the same vein, YAN Xuetong argues that multilateral diplomacy provides a peaceful international environment beneficial for China's rise because "the more China participates in multilateral activities, the more other countries will perceive China to be abiding with international order, and build a better impression of China. This will help to facilitate the international community's acceptance of the reality of China's rising power."²¹⁸

Apart from refuting the "China threat" theory, multilateralism offered a means of hedging against a possible U.S.-led containment coalition that appeared to be forming with the tightening of U.S. bilateral alliances from 1996 onwards. At this time, a number of

215. WANG Gungwu is the Director of the East Asian Institute at the National University of Singapore. WANG Gungwu, "The Fourth Rise of China: Cultural Implications," *China: An International Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (September 2004), p. 319.

216. The China International Study Forum is an annual symposium sponsored by the School of International Studies at Renmin University of China, and organized by thirteen other Chinese think tanks and research institutions. At its inaugural meeting in June 2005, it brought together more than 100 Chinese government officials and scholars from home and abroad for discussions. Details of the conference proceeding are available at "Zhongguo Guoji Wenti Luntan," [China International Study Forum], *Xinlangwang* [Sina News]. Available at <http://news.sina.com.cn/pc/z/irelations/index.shtml>. The text of the participants' remarks can also be found in the journal article, "Duobian Zhuyi yu Zhongguo Waijiao," [Multilateralism and Chinese Diplomacy], *Jiaoxue yu Yanjiu* [Teaching and Research], No. 8 (2005).

217. YUE Xiaoyong is Director of China's State Council Office of Policy Planning. YUE Xiaoyong, "Duobian Zhuyi yu Zhongguo Waijiao," [Multilateralism and Chinese Diplomacy], p. 16.

218. YAN Xuetong, "Duobian Zhuyi yu Zhongguo Waijiao," [Multilateralism and Chinese Diplomacy], p. 14. See also YAN Xuetong, "Zhongguo Jueqi de Guoji Anquan Huanjing," [The International Security Environment of China's Rise], *Guoji Jingji Pinlun* [International Economic Review], No. 1 (1998), p. 29.

well-placed Chinese analysts were expressing their frustration over how China's cautious insistence on protecting its sovereign rights through bilateral interactions had crippled its ability to make foreign policy initiatives. As a CASS analyst lamented, China's foreign policy guideline at this time was "seeking interests while avoiding harm [*quli bihai*];" yet in reality the "primary goal is avoiding harm [*yi bihai weizhu*]" at the expense of actively promoting China's national interests.²¹⁹ Beijing thus hoped that a shift in strategy—a warmer embrace of multilateral mechanisms—would persuade regional actors to decrease their reliance on the U.S. hubs-and-spokes security architecture in East Asia. QIAN Wenrong explains:

The main reason why China has been increasingly supportive of the ARF is because the U.S. is strengthening its military alliances with regional actors—particularly its alliance with Japan—and treating China as a "potential enemy." Because China does not have the diplomatic principle of establishing military alliances with other countries, it has to pursue multilateral security cooperation.²²⁰

Multilateralism thus provided Beijing with the opportunity to offer the region an alternative to the current U.S.-led architecture of bilateral military alliances and forward-deployed military forces.²²¹ This is evidenced by how Beijing presents the NSC not as an end in itself: Beijing's promotion of the NSC goes hand-in-hand with calls for states to abandon the bilateral alliances they maintain with the U.S. from the Cold War era. For example, at the same time that the 1998 PRC Defense White Paper presents the NSC as a new approach to international affairs, it also explicitly declares that "it is imperative to abandon the Cold War mentality."²²² Indeed, though

219. Yong DENG, "Conception of National Interests: Realpolitik, Liberal Dilemma, and the Possibility of Change," in Yong DENG and Fei-ling WANG, eds. (1999), p. 62.

220. QIAN Wenrong is the Executive Deputy Director of the Center for World Affairs Studies at Xinhua News Agency in Beijing. He is also a member of China's committee at the Council on Security Cooperation in Asia-Pacific (CSCAP). QIAN Wenrong, "Shuangbian Junshi Tongmeng yu Duobian Anquan Hezuo de Guanxi," [The Relationship Between Bilateral Security Alliances and Multilateral Security Cooperation], *Taipingyang Xuebao* [Pacific Journal], No. 3 (1998), p. 21.

221. Jing-dong YUAN (2000), p. 42. See also Michael Swaine, "China: Exploiting a Strategic Opening," in Ashley J. Tellis and Michael Willis, eds., *Strategic Asia 2004-05: Confronting Terrorism in the Pursuit of Power* (Seattle, Washington: National Bureau of Research, 2004), p. 72-3.

222. "China's National Defense," Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, July 1998. Available at <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/whitepaper/2.html>.

Johnston and Evans describe the architects of the 1998 National Defense White Paper as being influenced by regional norms and concepts such as non-use of force, dialogue, and consensus, they also concede that the White Paper is fundamentally a “re-packaging of familiar ideas built around the rejection of military blocs and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.”²²³ As XU Xin explains, the NSC “aims to compete with a predominant realist security fashion reflected in what the Chinese criticize as the ‘Cold War mentality’ by presenting an alternative approach to international and regional security cooperation.”²²⁴ XIA Liping argues that the emergence of multilateral mechanisms in the region will decrease the need for states to deploy advanced weapons systems and depend on military alliances.²²⁵ During his interviews with Chinese analysts in 1996, Thomas Christensen found that several of his Chinese interlocutors—both civilian and military analysts—would first complain about the April 1996 Clinton-Hashimoto Joint Communiqué and assertions by U.S. officials that the U.S.-Japan alliance was a keystone of East Asian security, then raise multilateral dialogue—which had often been discounted—as an alternative to bilateral relations with the U.S. without any prompting.²²⁶ For Beijing, accepting a larger role for multilateralism was “the least unpleasant method to reduce the threat posed by U.S. bilateralism.”²²⁷

In open source articles, Chinese analysts acknowledge that greater Chinese support for regional cooperation provides the least confrontational means of offsetting a hard-line U.S. policy toward China. ZHANG Yunling frankly points out:

China needs stability. But stability does not mean that there is no change. The stability that China needs includes both the acceptance of the status quo, as well as the adjustment of the status quo. . . . Accepting the existing order and safeguarding its stability is in China’s fundamental interest. Of course, ‘accepting and safeguarding’ does not mean that China does not have its own claims. As a devel-

223. Johnston and Evans, p. 260-61.

224. XU Xin, p. 19.

225. XIA Liping is General-Secretary and Professor at the Shanghai Institute for International Strategic Studies (SISS). XIA Liping, “Dui Dongbeiyi Duobian Anquan Hezuo de Yixie Kanfa,” [Some Views of Multilateral Cooperation in Northeast Asia], *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi* [Contemporary International Relations], No. 12 (1996), p. 13.

226. Thomas J. Christensen, “Pride, Pressure, and Politics: The Roots of Beijing’s Worldview,” in Yong DENG and Fei-ling WANG, eds., p. 255.

227. Ibid, p. 246.

oping Great Power, and as a participant in the existing order, China hopes that it can fulfill its own national interests, and conduct adjustments that will meet its own national interests.²²⁸

ZHAO Yinliang writes, "China gradually understood that multilateral dialogue forums not only dispel the 'China threat theory' and constrain China's behavior, but also constrain the behavior of other powerful states."²²⁹ XIN Benjian recommends that China should continue advocating multilateralism because in doing so, China can "cleverly grasp the direction and process of multilateral affairs, safeguard our national interests, and restrain the impact that the U.S. bilateral military arrangements have on the region."²³⁰ Though YAN Xuetong doubts the efficacy of multilateral organizations, he nonetheless holds that participation in such forums is "good" for China because "the U.S., as the larger power, will face an even heavier restraint on its power from such organizations."²³¹ Similarly, QIAN Wenrong acknowledges that though "the ARF only imposes normative restraints and hold its members to international law, it still has a role to play in exerting some degree of restraint on the strengthening of U.S. bilateral military alliances."²³² The 1998 CASS report on multilateralism presented to MOFA argues that China can attain the "beneficial new order [*youli de xin zhixu*]" it needs as a late-rising great power "not by overturning or destroying the existing order, but by moderating the structure and norms of the existing order through existing multilateral institutions and being a participant of the current order."²³³ As an example of how China can adjust the current order by participating in it, ZHANG Yunling explains that China can significantly decrease the influence and necessity of the current U.S. bilateral alliance system by devel-

228. ZHANG Yunling, "Ruhe Renshi Zhongguo Zai Yatai Diqu Mianlin de Guoji Huanjing," [How to Recognize the International Environment China Faces in the Asia-Pacific Region], *Dangdai Yatai* [Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies], No. 6 (2003), p. 4.

229. ZHAO Yinliang, "Quyu Tizhi Bianqian yu Zhongguo he Dongmeng de Zhengzhi Hezuo," [Regional Systemic Changes and China's Political Cooperation with ASEAN], *Guoji Guancha* [International Survey], No. 6, (2004), p. 23.

230. XIN Benjian, p. 31.

231. YAN Xuetong (2005), p. 15.

232. QIAN Wenrong, p. 22.

233. ZHANG Yunling identifies the current international order as the "'peaceful American-governed' order" but does not define what he envisions the "new order" to be. Taking the report as a whole, this "new order" should, at a minimum, be one in which China would have greater influence. See ZHANG Yunling (2000), p. 9.

oping multilateral regional frameworks.²³⁴ By advocating multi-tiered, cooperative mechanisms—including military ones—that are based on discussion, equal participation and mutual respect, China can provide mechanisms that are different from those led by the U.S.²³⁵ These exhortations are strikingly similar to the reasons given by the 1995 CASS report (see p. 44) and suggest that the worldview of the Chinese elites has not fundamentally changed.

Hence the change in China's attitude towards the ARF and multilateralism seems to be more of a new pragmatic strategy born out of constrained choice to pursue national interests, rather than an entirely different way of considering the meaning of international politics. CHU Shulong stresses that "China's aim in participating in [multilateral] institutions is to fulfill China's national interests from within these institutions, to strive and fight for the rights belonging to China and developing nations, and to reform the unfair, unreasonable elements of the international system."²³⁶ ZHOU Guiyin affirms that "though the boundaries between national and international security are blurring, military strength is still the means to safeguard China's comprehensive security."²³⁷ The 1998 CASS report reminds that maintaining state sovereignty is still at the core of China's security.²³⁸ It warns that the "key challenge" China faces in dealing with non-traditional security problems is protecting its sovereignty, and emphasizes that pursuing multilateral solutions must not be at the expense of "traditional sovereignty [*chuantong zhuquan*]."²³⁹

IV. Chinese Diplomacy in the 21st Century

Since Beijing promulgated the NSC in 1998, it has demonstrated a deeper commitment to the ARF. In particular, the rate and quality of its participation have notably increased after 2001. Not only has China offered to host or co-chair more ARF meetings

234. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

235. *Ibid.*

236. CHU Shulong is a senior fellow at CICIR, and a professor at the College of International Relations in Beijing. He is also a member of China's CSCAP committee. CHU Shulong, "Duobian Waijiao: Fanchou, Beijing, ji Zhongguo de Yingdui," [Multilateral Diplomacy: Categories, Background, and China's Response], *Shijie Jingji yu Zhengzhi* [World Politics and Economics], No. 10 (2001), p. 44

237. ZHOU Guiyin is a professor of international relations at Nanjing International Studies University. Zhou Guiyin, "Xin Shiji de Guoji Anquan yu Anquan Zhanlue," [International Security and Security Strategy in the New Century], No. 1 (2000), p. 69

238. ZHANG Yunling (2000), p. 5.

239. *Ibid.*

after 2001, some of these initiatives suggested a bolder attempt to increase cooperation between ARF participants. At the June 2003 ARF meeting, China proposed setting up a Security Policy Conference (SPC) that would bring together, for the first time, defense officials for military and security discussions within the framework of the ARF.²⁴⁰ At the ISG on CBMs hosted by Beijing that November, Chinese officials circulated a SPC Concept Paper that called upon participants to “open new channels of dialogue and exchanges to further increase mutual trust and understanding among defense officials.”²⁴¹ The paper revealed that China was more willing to discuss various security issues it had previously been hesitant in approaching, such as defense modernization and military strategies and doctrines.²⁴² As Yong DENG and Thomas Moore put it, this initiative would have been “unthinkable” only a few years earlier, due to China’s “victim complex” and “rigid notion of sovereignty.”²⁴³

The papers that China has presented to ARF participants since 2001 also highlight China’s increasing activism. China has only presented two Position Papers to the ARF,²⁴⁴ and both came in 2002, approximately a year after September 11. Since 2004, it has consistently contributed to the ARF’s Annual Security Outlook, a compilation of voluntary, non-edited reports by participating states on their individual states’ security outlook for that year.²⁴⁵ Pressed by countries such as the U.S., Japan and ASEAN, China has also slightly increased its military transparency. Though still far short of Western standards, China’s defense white papers have gradually provided more information on PLA doctrine and strategy. Given China’s averseness to military transparency, this progression should not be discounted.²⁴⁶

240. “Chairman’s Statement: The Tenth Meeting of ASEAN Regional Forum,” Phnom Penh, June 18, 2003. Available at <http://www.aseansec.org/14846.htm>.

241. “ARF Security Policy Conference: A Concept Paper for Discussion,” November 20-22, 2003, Beijing. Electronic document obtained from a Chinese analyst.

242. *Ibid.* See also David Shambaugh, p. 87-88.

243. Yong DENG and Thomas G. Moore, “China Views Globalization: Towards a New Great Power Politics?” *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (2004), p. 27.

244. Interview with Chinese MOFA official, March 2006.

245. The ARF’s Annual Security Outlook from 2000 to 2005 can be found at the ARF’s website, <http://www.aseanregionalforum.org/Default.aspx?tabid=83>.

246. China remains deeply suspicious of the idea of increasing the transparency of its military and defense strategies. According to Chinese analysts, while U.S. preponderance allows Washington to use transparency as a form of military deterrence, weaker countries like China would only display their weaknesses and increase their vulnerability. As Xia Liping argues, “China cannot have as much military transparency as that of

Table 3.1: CBMs, ISGs and ISMs Chaired and/or Hosted by China and Papers Presented at ARF Meetings²⁴⁷

Year	CBM/ISG/ISM	Papers Presented at ARF meetings
1997	Co-chaired the ISG on CBMs with the Philippines in Beijing	
1998	Hosted the Military Medicine Symposium on Tropical Hygiene and Prevention and Treatment of Tropical Infectious Diseases in Beijing	White Paper on China's National Defense in 1998
1999	Hosted the ARF Professional Training Program on China's Security Policy in Beijing	
2000	Hosted the 4th ARF Meeting of Heads of Defense College, Universities and Institutions in Beijing	White Paper on China's National Defense in 2000
	Hosted the ARF Seminar on Defense Conversion Cooperation in Beijing	China's contribution to the ARF's 2000 Annual Security Outlook
2001		China's contribution to the ARF's 2001 Annual Security Outlook
2002	Hosted ARF Seminar on the Outsourcing of Military Logistics Support in Beijing	China's Position Paper on Enhanced Cooperation in the Field of Non-Traditional Security Issues China's Position Paper on the New Security Concept White Paper on China's National Defense in 2002
2003	Proposed the establishment of an ARF Regional Maritime Information Center Co-hosted the ISG on CBMs with Myanmar in Beijing	
2004	Hosted the 1st ARF Workshop on Alternative Development in Kunming Hosted the 1st ARF Security Policy Conference in Beijing	White Paper on China's National Defense in 2004 China contributed to the ARF's 2004 Annual Security Outlook

the U.S. because China's defense forces are much weaker than those of the U.S." XIA Liping, "The Evolution of Chinese Views Towards CBMs," in Michael Krepon, ed., "Chinese Perspectives on Confidence-building Measures," Report No. 23 (May 1997), p. 17. Available at <http://www.stimson.org/china/pdf/report23.pdf>.

247. List compiled from ASEAN Regional Forum's public library, various Chairman's Statements and Reports from 1994-2005, available at <http://www.aseanregionalforum.org/Default.aspx?tabid=67>; "China's National Defense in 2002," Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China (December 2002). Available at <http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/20021209/index.htm>; "China's National Defense in 2004," Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China (December 2004). Available at <http://english.people.com.cn/whitepaper/defense2004/defense2004.html>.

- 2005 Hosted the 1st ARF Workshop on China's contribution to the ARF's 2005
Enhancing cooperation in the Field of Annual Security Outlook
Non-Traditional Security in Hainan
- 2006 China to co-chair the ARF Seminar on China to contribute to the ARF's 2006
Non-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Annual Security Outlook
Destruction with the U.S. and Singapore
China to host the 2nd ARF Workshop on
Alternative Development
China to co-chair the 4th ISM on
Counter-Terrorism and Transnational
Crime
China to co-chair ISM on Disaster Relief
and Related Issues with Indonesia

V. Explaining China's Tighter Embrace of Security Multilateralism

Hedging Against Potential U.S.-led Encirclement

The entry of an administration perceived as taking a harsher position toward Beijing in 2001 strengthened the imperative of forwarding a multilateral approach to security. When the Bush administration took office, Chinese analysts noted with concern that the new leadership showed strong indications of "containing" China: "If the Clinton administration can be said to have had intentions of hedging against and containing China, then the Bush administration can be said to have adopted even more concrete measures to hedge against and contain China."²⁴⁸ Bilateral tensions rose in April 2001 after a U.S. EP-3 surveillance plane collided with a Chinese F-8 jet fighter over the SCS.²⁴⁹ Analysts argued that "the new leadership has increased its attempts to 'Westernize,' 'fragment' and contain China."²⁵⁰ At the same time however, Chinese analysts affirmed again that the U.S. would continue to be the lone superpower for a long time. By supporting multilateral mechanisms, China could set

248. WU Chunsi is Associate Professor at the Center for American Studies at Fudan University. NI Shixiong is the Dean of the School of International Relations and Public Affairs and Director of the Center for American Studies at Fudan University. WU Chunsi and NI Shixiong, "Meiguo Dui Wai Zhanlue Tiaozhen yu ZhongMei Guanxi—'Xiao Bushi Zhengfu Duihua Zhengce Zouxian' Xueshu Yantaohui Zongshu," [Adjustments in U.S. External Strategy and Sino-American Relations—Summary of the Academic Discussion on 'Trends in the Bush Administration's China Policy'], *Guoji Guanqia* [International Survey], No. 4 (2001), p. 62.

249. Peter Hays Gries, *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics, and Diplomacy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 1.

250. MENG Xiangqing, "Canyu Duobian Anquan Hezuo: Jishi Taozhan, Yeshi Jiyu," [Participation in Multilateral Security Cooperation: A Challenge and Opportunity], *Shijie Jingji yu Zhengzhi* [World Economics and Politics], No. 10 (2001), p. 27.

itself apart from Bush's unilateralism, thereby checking US power and extending Beijing's voice and influence in the region.²⁵¹

September 11 accelerated China's regional multilateral efforts because it offered Beijing the opportunity to improve its relations with the U.S. While Beijing's own interest in combating terrorism—China struggles with separatist Muslim elements in Xinjiang and has experienced terrorist attacks in Beijing and Xinjiang—largely explains China's strategic decision to cooperate with the U.S. in the war on terror,²⁵² it does not directly explain why China should increase its activity in the ARF, a discussion forum that has no power to establish counter-terrorism policies. Rather, backing ARF activities on counter-terrorism would complement the broader Chinese effort to cooperate with the U.S. and improve relations in the process.²⁵³ Writing in the immediate aftermath, WANG Yizhou recommends that China should support the U.S. in its fight against terrorism because doing so “will help improve U.S.-China relations, be useful for China's stability and development, and build a more positive image of China on the international stage.”²⁵⁴ At a conference organized by IAPS in December 2001, Chinese analysts agreed that China should seize the opportunity to improve relations with the U.S. while its strategic focus had shifted away from China

251. WANG Yizhou, “Zhongguo yu Duobian Waijiao,” [China and Multilateral Diplomacy], *Shijie Jingji yu Zhengzhi* [World Economics and Politics], No. 10 (2001), p. 4-5; PANG Zhongying, “Zhongguo de Yazhou Zhanlue: Lingguo de Duobian Zhuyi,” [China's Asia Strategy: Flexible Multilateralism], *Shijie Jingji yu Zhengzhi* [World Economics and Politics], No. 10 (2001), p. 33-34.

252. For a detailed account of the factors motivating Beijing's cooperation on the war on terror, see Thomas J. Christensen, “China,” in Richard J. Ellings and Aaron L. Friedberg with Michael Wills, eds., *Strategic Asia 2002-03: Asian Aftershocks* (Seattle, Washington: National Bureau of Research, 2002), p. 51-94.

253. The selectivity of China's multilateral cooperation—China cooperates largely when it is in its interest to do so, or when cooperation is at a relatively low cost to sovereignty—is highlighted by the fact that while Beijing strongly supports SCO and ARF counter-terrorism activities and discussions, it does not support the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), an international coalition of states created by the U.S. to stop shipments of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their delivery systems. China is worried that PSI activities will be aimed at containing North Korea, which could escalate into regime collapse and instability along China's borders. In contrast, support for the SCO and ARF is in China's own interest and at relatively low-cost. China has an interest in limiting destabilizing terrorist activities along its border with Central Asian countries, and China can easily support ARF activities at a relatively low-cost since the ARF does not have the power to interfere in a state's internal affairs.

254. WANG Yizhou, “‘9.11 Zonghezeng’ yu Xin de Guoji Anquan Taishi,” [“9.11 Syndrome” and the New International Security Situation], *Guoji Jingji Pinglun* [International Economic Review], No. 11 (2001), p. 9.

to Central and South Asia.²⁵⁵ YUAN Jian expresses China's support for the U.S. war on terror at the June 2002 Asia-Pacific Roundtable meeting:

Given the transnational nature of these new problems, their resolution and containment would rely heavily on multilateral approaches. . . China's foreign policy attaches great importance to the promotion of regional cooperation in combating various forms of non-traditional security threat, and in demolishing their breeding grounds.²⁵⁶

Although September 11 has offered a chance to improve relations with the U.S. and tackle domestic separatist issues, it has also brought challenges to China's long-term security. Chinese analysts warn that the war against terrorism has allowed the U.S. to enhance its global leadership and forge a string of military relations around China's periphery.²⁵⁷ They agree that though Washington's spotlight is no longer on China, "in the long run the U.S. is still going to treat China as a "potential adversary."²⁵⁸ China thus cannot afford to take the upswing in Sino-American relations for granted. XIA Liping warns: "In America's regional security strategy, there are aspects that seek to cooperate with China, but there are also aspects that seek to hedge against and contain China. . . the U.S. has seized the opportunity provided by the war against terrorism to support Japan's overseas naval dispatch, strengthen its military relations with India and Vietnam, and insert its armed forces into Central

255. "2001 Nian Yatai Diqu Zhengzhi Jingji Xingshi Yantaohui Zaijing Juxing," [Academic Discussion Held in Beijing on the Political and Economic Situation in the Asia-Pacific in 2001], *Dangdai Yatai* [Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies], No. 1 (2002), p. 63. See also SHEN Dingli, "China's Evaluation of the Adjustment to U.S. Security Policy Since September 11, 2001," *Defense and Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (December 2003), p. 323; Jia Qingguo (2005), p. 402-3.

256. YUAN Jian is the Secretary-General of China's CSCAP delegation. YUAN Jian, "New Opportunities for Regional Cooperation," paper presented at the 16th Asia-Pacific Roundtable, "September 11: Political and Security Impact and Changes in The Strategic Balance of the Asia-Pacific Region," June 3, 2002. Electronic document acquired from Alastair Iain Johnston.

257. Interview with Chinese analyst in Beijing, January 2006. See also LI Qingsi, "Zhongguo yu Dongmeng Guanxi: Mulin Waijiao de Fanlie," [China's Relations with ASEAN: An Example of Good Neighborly Diplomacy], *Guoji Luntan* [International Forum], No. 3 (2004), p. 33.

258. "2001 Nian Yatai Diqu Zhengzhi Jingji Xingshi Yantaohui Zaijing Juxing," [Academic Discussion Held in Beijing on the Political and Economic Situation in the Asia-Pacific in 2001], p. 63.

and South Asia.”²⁵⁹ An analysis of China’s regional security environment released in 2003 argues that China is being gradually encircled by the U.S. through U.S. deployments in Southeast Asia and Southwest Pacific Ocean, increased cooperation between the U.S., India, Pakistan and Mongolia, and strengthened U.S. bilateral alliances in East Asia.²⁶⁰

Even if Chinese analysts do not perceive U.S. penetration into areas around China as directly targeted at their country, they argue that the penetration itself poses a threat to China’s security interests. In a nuanced analysis of the impact the U.S.-Japan security alliance has on East Asia, YU Tiejun highlights the operation of the security dilemma, suggesting that Chinese leaders will be nervous about the strengthening of U.S. military relations around its borders, regardless of Washington’s intent for doing so:

Military alliances are fundamentally a type of exclusive security mechanism, for members of the alliance, their sense of security will increase when the alliance strengthens, but for states outside the alliance, their sense of insecurity will undoubtedly increase. . . Even when the U.S. and Japan send their representatives to China during the process of reviewing their alliance to clarify issues with Beijing, and remain vigilant about maintaining transparency, China is still very sensitive and worried about such developments, because of objective security problems in the region—such as the Taiwan problem, the Spratly dispute, and regional Theater Missile Defense development.²⁶¹

Like the mid-1990s, China responded to its fear of potential U.S. encirclement after September 11 by promulgating a form of multilateral security cooperation that cautions against alliance-building. In May 2002, China released a Position Paper on non-traditional security issues emphasizing that in regional cooperation “it is important to observe the principle of mutual respect for sover-

259. XIA Liping, “Meiguo Duihua Zhanlue Jiqi Neizai Maodun,” [America’s China Strategy and Its Inherent Contradictions], *Dangdai Yatai* [Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies], No. 2 (2004), p. 6-7.

260. TANG Xizhong, LIU Shaohua, and Chen Benhong, *Zhongguo yu Zhoubian Guojia Guanxi* [China and Its Relations with Neighboring Countries] (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 2003).

261. YU Tiejun, “Dongya de Junshi Tongmeng,” [East Asia’s Military Alliances], in YAN Xuetong and JIN Dexiang, chief eds., p. 360.

eighty and non-interference in each other's internal affairs."²⁶² At the ninth ARF Meeting in July 2002, China pushed for a more concrete version of the NSC mentioned in the 1998 White Paper by presenting a Position Paper focused solely on the NSC.²⁶³ The Position Paper again emphasizes that the NSC is an approach to security that "discard[s] the mentality of cold war and power politics" and "focuses on enhancing trust through dialogue and promoting security through cooperation."²⁶⁴ Chinese Foreign Minister TANG Jiaxuan noted that September 11 highlighted the importance of multilateral security cooperation, but suggested that this cooperation should be centered on China's NSC.²⁶⁵ Chinese analysts presented the NSC as a fairer way of conducting international relations by contrasting the NSC to U.S. unilateralism. In her comments on the NSC, Chinese MOFA spokeswoman ZHANG Qiyue charged that "some countries"—read the U.S.—were "focusing only on their security interests and the new concept would instead give play to everyone's concerns. . . . We shouldn't try to achieve absolute security for oneself and threaten other parties' security."²⁶⁶ SUN Xiaoling argues that the "hegemonic stability theory" driving U.S. foreign policy has led to destabilizing revisionism in the Middle East, exemplified by the Iraq War; whereas China's NSC promises an equal platform for all countries big and small to promote trust and enhance their security.²⁶⁷ That the height of China's "effort to shape the conceptual underpinnings of a regional security mechanism" should come in 1997 and again in 2002—periods in which the U.S. seemed to be increasing its influence in the region—

262. "China's Position Paper on Enhanced Cooperation in the Field of Non-Traditional Security Issues," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, May 29, 2002. Available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zzjg/gjs/gjzzyhy/2612/2614/t15318.htm>.

263. "China Releases Position Paper, Offers New Security Concept at ASEAN Meetings," August 1, 2002, FBIS-CHI-2002-0801.

264. "China's Position Paper on the New Security Concept," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, July 31, 2002. Available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zzjg/gjs/gjzzyhy/2612/2614/t15319.htm>.

265. "Speech by Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan at 9th ARF Foreign Ministers' Meeting," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, July 31, 2002. Available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zzjg/gjs/gjzzyhy/2612/2614/t15320.htm>.

266. Cindy Sui, "China Proposes New Asia Pacific Security Forum in Subtle Poke at U.S.," *Agence France Presse*, June 18, 2003.

267. SUN Xiaolong, "'Baquan Wending Lun' yu Zhongguo Xin Anquan Guan: Yizhong Bijiao Shijiao," ["Hegemonic Stability Theory" and China's New Security Concept: A Comparative Approach], *Shijie Jingji yu Zhengzhi* [World Economics and Politics], No. 2 (2004), p. 56.

underscores the centrality of America's East Asia policy to Chinese strategic thinking on regional multilateralism.

The Shangri-La Dialogue and the SPC: China's Attempt to Extrude the U.S. from Asia?

A number of non-PRC analysts argue that China's expanding activism in the ARF is motivated by a desire to extrude the U.S. from Asia and eventually establish itself as the leader of East Asia. The evidence they often cite for this argument is China's cold-shouldering of the Shangri-La Dialogue and its proposal to set up a Security Policy Conference (SPC) under the aegis of the ARF. The Shangri-La Dialogue is an annual security conference organized by the London-based think tank, the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), hosted and co-sponsored by the Singapore government, and well-attended by senior Western defense officials such as U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. China sent a relatively low-level delegation to the first two forums in 2002 and 2003, and none in 2004. Michael Vatikiotis argues that Beijing pays so little attention to the Shangri-la Dialogue because it is annoyed that Western leaders—particularly the U.S. and Britain—are leading a regional security forum.²⁶⁸ Hence it proposed the SPC—a forum under the ARF and hence led by ASEAN states—in the hopes that it will balance the Shangri-La Dialogue.²⁶⁹ In doing so, Vatikiotis argues, China desires to “marginalize and eventually exclude the U.S. from regional security discussions.”²⁷⁰ Similarly, Dana Dillon and John Tkacik attribute revisionist dissatisfaction to Chinese leaders: “[China] stopped attending the Shangri-La Dialogue in 2004, apparently because it believed Asian countries, not Western countries, should lead regional-security mechanisms.”²⁷¹ They fur-

268. Michael Vatikiotis, “China: A Diplomatic Offensive,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. 167, No. 31 (August 5, 2004), p. 29. The Shangri-La Dialogue has attracted widespread and high-level interest, which is probably a cause of concern for China. In its inaugural meeting in 2002, some 15 defense ministers and over 120 senior officials, parliamentarians and experts from 18 countries gathered to discuss Asian security issues. See Felix Soh, “New Asian Security Ideas Likely at Asia-Pacific Defense Dialogue,” *The Straits Times (Singapore)*, May 15, 2002.

269. *Ibid.*

270. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

271. Dana Dillon and John J Tkacik Jr., “China's Quest for Asia,” *Policy Review*, No. 134 (December 2005/January 2006), p. 35. Also see LAI Yueh-Tsan, p. 69 for a similar argument.

ther argue that the SPC is “an attempt by Beijing to gain control of the ARF” and is “another instrument of Chinese hegemony.”²⁷²

Available evidence certainly lines up with the argument that China is not comfortable with the idea of Western countries leading a regional security forum. The inaugural Shangri-La Dialogue in 2002 received much praise from its participants because it “wasn’t simply a polite discussion.”²⁷³ Participants were able to exchange views frankly without being under pressure to come up with joint statements.²⁷⁴ This led to comparisons with the ARF, which was criticized for being “too restrictive for members to take a pro-active approach towards threats facing the region.”²⁷⁵ Chinese analysts noted such comparisons with some worry because they did not want the Shangri-La Dialogue to usurp the ARF’s role as the main regional security forum, whose ASEAN-led diplomatic style China had grown comfortable with.²⁷⁶ China’s SPC proposal was thus arguably a response to the Shangri-La Dialogue. Before this proposal, the Shangri-La Dialogue was the only forum that allowed Asia’s defense ministers and key counterparts from outside the region to interact; ARF meetings primarily consisted of foreign ministers.²⁷⁷ In explaining China’s initiative to the ARF, China’s Foreign Minister LI Zhaoxing stated that China wanted “increased participation by defense officials under the ARF umbrella.”²⁷⁸

However China’s attitude towards the Shangri-La Dialogue and the SPC is more complicated than that presented by Vatikiotis, Dillion and Tkacik. There are several reasons explaining China’s behavior. First, the PLA, the government arm from which representatives are expected to be sent, does not send its defense officials because there are very few, if any, senior officials fluent enough in English to feel adequate in engaging in open, rapid debate at a

272. *Ibid.*

273. CHUA Lee Hoong, “Security Meet’s Success Prompts Meeting Next Year,” *The Straits Times* (Singapore), June 3, 2002.

274. *Ibid.*

275. *Ibid.*

276. Interview with Chinese analyst, January 2006.

277. Ralph A. Cossa, “Powell Speaks: Was Anyone Listening?” in Pacific Forum, CSIS, *Comparative Connections*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (July 2002), p. 6. Available at <http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/0202q.pdf>. The Shangri-La Dialogue also provides a venue for the heads of military to hold bilateral talks with their counterparts at the sidelines of the forum to discuss bilateral military- and security-related issues.

278. Cindy Sui, “China Proposes New Asia Pacific Security Forum in Subtle Poke at U.S.”

highly-profiled international conference.²⁷⁹ China's MOFA on the other hand, has diplomats trained in the language and skills to do so. Second, IISS had invited Taiwanese officials to attend the inaugural forum.²⁸⁰ In 2002, Taiwan sent a delegation led by Antonio CHIANG, the Deputy Secretary-General of Taiwan's National Security Council (NSC), as well as numerous Taiwanese security specialists.²⁸¹ This infuriated the Chinese leadership, because they consider the presence of Taiwanese representatives as a symbol of Taiwanese sovereignty. Adding insult to injury, IISS had not consulted China about the invitation.²⁸² Given China's long-standing insistence that all countries should recognize that Taiwan belongs to the PRC, and given that China has a consistent record of insisting upon Taiwan's exclusion from multilateral forums,²⁸³ its decision to snub the Shangri-La Dialogue becomes more of an issue based on an anti-Taiwanese independence principle rather than a revisionist desire to undermine the U.S.

The pattern of Chinese representation in the Shangri-La Dialogue also cautions against assuming that Beijing's lukewarm response toward the forum is indicative of an intention to undermine the U.S. If Beijing does have the intention to do so, one would expect it to consistently send low-ranking officials or boycott the forum. However one finds that China became more receptive to the forum when Taiwan stopped attending it. In 2002, as a sign of protest against Taiwan's presence, China sent a relatively low-ranking

279. Interview with Chinese analyst. Conversation with Thomas Christensen, May 2006. See also GOH Sui Noi, "Why Beijing Lies Low at Regional Security Forums," *The Straits Times (Singapore)*, June 8, 2006.

280. Interviews with Chinese analysts, January 2006. Interviews with Southeast Asian analysts and MOFA officials, January 2006.

281. He was also reported to hold talks with Peter Brookes, the U.S. deputy assistant secretary of defense for Asian and Pacific affairs during the trip. See Jay CHEN and Victor LAI, "Taipei Officials Attend Security Conference in Singapore," *Central News Agency (Taiwan)*, May 31, 2002; Ralph Cossa, p. 6. Taiwan's NSC is supposed to be the highest advisory body on defense, security, and foreign policy matters, similar to the NSC in the U.S. Organizationally, it is in the Presidential Office. Sending Antonio CHIANG then would be like sending the U.S. Deputy National Security Advisor, someone with a direct line to Taiwan's President. I am grateful to Ian CHONG for explaining how Taiwan's defense bodies compare with that of the U.S.

282. IISS receives funds from Taiwanese groups, causing China to show greater sensitivity to indications that it supports Taiwanese independence. Interview with Southeast Asian analyst, January 2006.

283. For example, China delayed its entry into CSCAP because it was negotiating with CSCAP members about the role Taiwan would play in the organization. It has also lobbied hard to exclude Taiwan from the World Health Organization.

delegation led by Major-General ZHAN Maohai, the director-general of the Foreign Affairs Bureau of China's Ministry of Defense.²⁸⁴ In 2003, China further downgraded its delegation and in 2004, it did not send any representatives. However after Taiwan stopped sending official representatives to the forum in 2004, China showed increasing signs of interest. In 2005, China selected CUI Tiankai—Director-General of the Asia Department of MOFA, a position slightly more senior than Zhan's—to lead the Chinese delegation and “test the waters.”²⁸⁵ Cui's sound performance at the conference raised expectations that China would send a higher-ranking representative and delegation to the June 2006 forum.²⁸⁶

Unfortunately, China downgraded its 2006 delegation by sending TANG Qingsheng, deputy director of the Foreign Ministry's Asia bureau, despite the continued absence of Taiwanese officials from the forum. This however, is less explained by a desire to snub forums in which the U.S. and its allies play a significant role, than by China's frustration that the previous conference had been, from its point of view, used as a platform to question, even criticize, China's military spending in the presence of defense ministers and military specialists from across Asia and the Pacific Rim.²⁸⁷ At the 2005 conference, Rumsfeld caused a stir when he bluntly asked why China continues to enlarge its arms purchases since “no nation threatens China.”²⁸⁸ As this chapter explained earlier, China is highly sensitive to public criticism that may impinge upon the way it conducts state affairs.

Vatikiotis, Dillion and Tkacik's arguments also cut against the general pattern of Chinese participation in regional multilateral forums. Since the mid-1990s, China has sent representatives to virtu-

284. This delegation is relatively low-ranking when compared to those sent by other participants. The U.S. delegation was led by Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, while Britain, France, Australia, Japan, Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, and Singapore, among others, were represented by their Defense Ministers. See “Terrorism the Focus of Security Conference Here,” *The Straits Times (Singapore)*, May 31, 2002; Ralph Cossa, p. 6. Sending Major-General Zhan is similar to sending a U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Policy, which is a senior position, but not comparable to those sent by other states. I am grateful to Ian CHONG for explaining how China's defense bodies compare with that of the U.S.

285. Interview with Southeast Asian MOFA official, January 2006.

286. *Ibid.*

287. GOH Sui Noi, “No High-level Beijing Team as Forum is Seen as Anti-China,” *The Straits Times (Singapore)*, June 5, 2006.

288. David Boey, “U.S. Blasts China's Defense Spending,” *The Straits Times (Singapore)*, June 5, 2005.

ally every single multilateral discussion in the region.²⁸⁹ It is hardly in China's interest to boycott any security forum; in fact, in Beijing's eyes, the more the forum is being driven by Western countries, the more imperative it is for China to participate to ensure that the forum does not become an instrument for the U.S. to contain it in its absence.²⁹⁰ One Chinese analyst explains: "Chinese diplomacy is more subtle. We have worked very hard to learn how to 'play the game,' and it is not in our interest in jeopardizing our cause by snubbing a regional forum."²⁹¹ Taiwan's presence however, is sensitive enough to provoke a response from Beijing that deviates from the norm. As Thomas Christensen puts it, the Taiwan issue often elicits non-rational responses from the Chinese government because it is wrapped up in China's century of humiliation as well as modern-day Chinese nationalism.²⁹² In addition, if the argument that China wants to extrude the U.S. is correct, it makes little sense for China to strengthen security dialogue within the ARF, which involves the U.S. and other close U.S. allies such as Australia, Canada, the EU and New Zealand. One should find China advocating a high-level security mechanism in forums that exclude Western countries, such as the APT, to vie with the Shangri-La Dialogue. Yet China not only chose to propose the SPC within the ARF framework, it also pitched the SPC at a lower level than that of the Shangri-La Dialogue—the vice-ministerial level of defense ministries.²⁹³ China is less concerned about its defense officials' language abilities within the SPC, because as a confidence-building mechanism of a Foreign Ministry-led forum, it is hardly covered by international media. China also has little interest in picking specific multilateral forums to engage in. According to one Chinese analyst, the final shape of the regional architecture remains undetermined, so "China has to play all the games, because China does not know which one will dominate in future."²⁹⁴

There is little evidence to show that China's embrace of multilateralism is a strategy aimed at pushing the U.S. out of the region

289. Interview with Southeast Asian MOFA official, June 2005.

290. Interview with Chinese analyst, January 2006. This strategy of blocking any regional developments that may harm Chinese interest was also central to China's decision to enter the ARF.

291. Interview with Chinese analyst, January 2006.

292. Thomas J. Christensen, "Chinese Realpolitik: Reading Beijing's Worldview," *Foreign Affairs*, (September/October 1996), p. 45-6.

293. In the 2004 SPC hosted by Beijing, China was represented by XIONG Guangkai, Deputy Chief of General Staff of the PLA.

294. Interview with Chinese analyst, January 2006.

and establishing Chinese hegemony.²⁹⁵ China's drive to improve relations with its neighbors does not include attempts to construct an anti-American alliance, nor break up U.S. alliances. There are several reasons why China neither wants to remove the U.S. from the region nor assert regional dominance. First, Chinese elites are fully aware that they benefit from U.S. preponderance.²⁹⁶ As PANG Zhongying points out, "objectively, the United States has provided China with some degree of security arising from its 'hegemonic order.' China may not like it, but we cannot get away from it, because of the stability it engenders in our regional neighborhood."²⁹⁷ In a similar vein, WANG Yizhou argues: "though the U.S.-led international system is unreasonable and unfair, China cannot ignore the fact that it 'free rides' on certain benefits because of the U.S."²⁹⁸

Second, Beijing is fully aware that regional actors do not want the U.S. to leave the region—any attempt will only exacerbate the "China threat theory" Beijing is trying hard to thwart. JIN Xide and SUN Cheng articulate the region's perception of the U.S. as "the least mistrusted actor" when they explain that most countries in Northeast and Southeast Asia support the U.S. as a "balancer" in the region, largely to prevent destabilizing Sino-Japanese competition for leadership.²⁹⁹ Zhang and Tang also bluntly write that China's neighbors still nurse deep suspicions of Beijing's intentions, and any attempt to forge an anti-American alliance will only backfire: "With so many countries bordering China, China's leaders

295. China does seem to be internally balancing against U.S. military power by mobilizing economic, technological and human resources to increase its military capabilities. However what China is concerned about, at least in the immediate to medium term, is U.S. involvement in the Taiwan issue, not so much U.S. presence in the region per se.

296. Interview with Chinese analysts and MOFA officials, January 2006.

297. PANG Zhongying, "Some Points on Understanding China's International Environment," *In the National Interest*, Vol. 1, No. 6 (October 2002). Available at <http://www.inthenationalinterest.com/Articles/Vol1issue6/Vol1issue6Zhongying.html>.

298. WANG Yizhou, "Guanyu Duojihua de Ruogan Sikao" [A Few Thoughts Regarding Multipolarity] (2000). Available at <http://www.china-review.com/fwsq/xzsq.asp?page=88>.

299. JIN Xide is a researcher at CASS's Institute of Japanese Studies; SUN Cheng is a researcher at the China Institute of International Studies (CIIS). JIN Xide, "MeiRi Tongmen Guanxi de Tiaozheng yu Gengxin," [Adjustments and Renewals in the U.S.-Japan Alliance], in Zhang Yunling, ed., *Huoban Haishi Duishou: Tiaozheng Zhong de ZhongMeiRiE Guanxi* [Partners or Adversaries? China-U.S.-Japan-Russian Relations in Transformation] (Beijing: Shehui Kexue Wenxian Chubanshe, 2000), p. 297; SUN Cheng, "Daguo Guanxi yu Dongya Hezuo," [Great Power Relations and East Asian Cooperation], *Guoji Wenti Yanjiu* [International Studies], No. 4 (2001), p. 29.

clearly understand that no matter how strong China is, an aggressive strategy is definitely not in China's interest, because that will lead to China's neighbors forming a counterbalancing alliance with a distant great power (most probably the U.S.) against China."³⁰⁰ Third, China is fully aware that U.S. power so far exceeds that of others, that neither Beijing, nor any international coalition, is anywhere near peer competitor status to challenge U.S. supremacy.³⁰¹ As SHI Yinhong puts it, "there will be for a very long-term no possibility to form and maintain an international united front consolidated enough, strong enough, effective enough and permanent enough to balance against [U.S.] preponderance."³⁰² Fourth, Beijing needs to concentrate on its own economic development and has no desire to undertake regional responsibilities that may take resources away from its domestic agenda.

As this chapter has tried to show, the sudden surges in China's interest in multilateral cooperation seem catalyzed by perceived U.S. encirclement, and driven by a desire to undercut U.S. ability to do so. Put differently, China's embrace of multilateralism is a strategy of hedging against a potentially serious downturn in Sino-American relations in the future.³⁰³ As Zhang and Tang explain:

Recognizing the presence of the security dilemma and the ups and downs in the Sino-American relationship, China is executing a strategy of maintaining good neighborly relations and a stable regional environment to hedge against [*diyu*] the potential for Sino-American relations to deteriorate in future. . . . If China implements a moderate approach, the majority of regional countries will not adopt a

300. ZHANG Yunling and TANG Shiping (2004), p. 9. See also TANG Shiping, "Zhongguo de Jueqi yu Diqu Anquan," [China's Rise and Regional Security], *Dangdai Yatai* [Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies], No. 3 (2003), p. 15.

301. Interview with Chinese analyst in Beijing, January 2006. See also Yong DENG and Thomas Moore, p. 129.

302. SHI Yinhong is professor of international relations and Director of the Center for American Studies at Renmin University. SHI Yinhong, "The Rising China: Essential Disposition, Secular Grand Strategy, and Current Prime Problems," in Sasakawa Peace Foundation U.S.A. Program, "Asian Voices: Promoting Dialogue Between the U.S. and Asia," (February 2001), p. 7. Available at <http://www.spfusa.org/Program/av2001/feb1202.pdf>

303. Evan S. Medeiros defines Chinese and American hedging as the pursuit of "policies that, on one hand, stress engagement and integration mechanisms and, on the other, emphasize realist-style balancing in the form of external security cooperation with Asian states and national military modernization programs." Evan S. Medeiros, "Strategic Hedging and the Future of Asia-Pacific Stability," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Winter 2005/06), p. 145.

hard containment policy, and China will be able to enjoy a friendly regional security environment. For this reason, China has tirelessly worked hard to improve relations with its neighbors.³⁰⁴

Is Socialization an Alternative Explanation?

Constructivists argue that the rational calculation approach offered above is not contradicted by one that highlights the role of socialization in explaining China's regional multilateral diplomacy. Because socialization is a process requiring time to take effect, it is worthwhile to ask again, from the vantage point of 2006, whether "social learning" provides a better alternative than that offered above in explaining China's behavior. Alice Ba for example, stresses that China's continued interest in regional multilateralism cannot sufficiently be explained by a desire to limit U.S. power in East Asia.³⁰⁵ Although one might say that instrumental pragmatism born of necessity was driving China's multilateral policy in the mid-1990s, she argues that it does not make much sense for China to continue this policy "at a time when its situation is much improved."³⁰⁶ Rather, the process of interacting with ASEAN has caused China to change its "understanding of interests, relations and reasons for engagement."³⁰⁷ This transformative "social learning" explains why China has continued with its multilateral diplomacy.

Because Beijing's NSC dovetails nicely with ASEAN's own normative approaches to cooperative security, it is tempting to attribute the changes in China's regional policy to ASEAN's engagement of China. There are two problems with Ba's analysis. First, her premise that China's security situation has improved in recent years is not relevant to China's strategic calculations; what matters is how Chinese analysts *perceive* their security situation. As this chapter has tried to show, Chinese analysts remain highly watchful of changes in China's security environment, believing that as China increases its comprehensive national power, the U.S. will "try to either contain or mould [*suzao*] China's rise."³⁰⁸ As HU Jintao pri-

304. ZHANG Yunling and TANG Shiping (2004), p. 9.

305. Alice D. Ba (2006), p. 167.

306. *Ibid.*

307. *Ibid.*, p. 168.

308. LIU Jianfei is professor at the Central Party School's Institute of International Strategic Studies. LIU Jianfei, "Suzao Zhongguo: Meiguo Duihua Zhanlue Xin Dongxiang," [Moulding China: New Directions in America's Strategy Toward China], *Renmin*

vately remarked during an assessment of China's continued relative weakness vis-à-vis the U.S.:

The U.S. has strengthened its military deployments in the Asia-Pacific region, strengthened the US-Japan military alliance, strengthened strategic cooperation with India, improved relations with Vietnam, inveigled Pakistan, established a pro-American government in Afghanistan, increased arms sales to Taiwan, and so on. They have extended outposts and placed pressure points on us from the east, south, and west. This makes a great change in our geopolitical environment.³⁰⁹

While a number of analysts appraise China's security environment more positively,³¹⁰ this sanguinity is less a result of decreased nervousness about U.S. power than an increase in, as ZHANG Yunling puts it, "China's confidence in its ability to shape its regional environment."³¹¹ In this view, China's perception of its strategic vulnerability has remained relatively constant, but its confidence in its ability to make the most out of its situation using multilateral and "good neighborly" instruments has risen. Hence China's continued embrace of multilateralism is rational and does not, as Alice Ba argues, cut against "conventional wisdom."

The second problem with the constructivists' argument is as follows: available evidence shows that the "learning" that has occurred has been less about China absorbing ASEAN's teachings, but more about China actively seeking how to "play the regional diplomatic game" ever since it realized in the mid-1990s that bilateralism alone is not sufficient in hedging against a U.S.-led encirclement campaign. Since the mid-1990s, China has sent its officials on

Ribao, March 21, 2006. Available at <http://theory.people.com.cn/GB/40557/44058/46724/60535/4222338.html>. See also TANG Shiping, p. 17.

309. Andrew J. Nathan and Bruce Gilley, *China's New Rulers: The Secret Files* (London: Granta, 2003), p. 207-8.

310. For examples, see "'Zhongguo Zhoubian Anquan Xingshi Xueshu Taolunhui' Zai Jing Juxing," ["China's Regional Security Situation" Discussion Forum Held in Beijing], *Dangdai Yatai* [Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies], No. 3 (2005), p. 64; Zhongguo Xiandai Guoji Guanxi Yanjiuyuan [China Institute of Contemporary International Relations], *Guoji Zhanlue yu Anquan Xingshi Pinggu, 2002-2003* [Review of the International Strategic and Security Situation, 2002-2003] (Beijing: Shishi Chubanshe, 2003), chapter 7; Zhongguo Xiandai Guoji Guanxi Yanjiuyuan [China Institute of Contemporary International Relations], *Guoji Zhanlue yu Anquan Xingshi Pinggu, 2003-2004* [Review of the International, Strategic, and Security Situation, 2003-2004] (Beijing: Shishi Chubanshe, 2004), chapter 7.

311. ZHANG Yunling (2005).

numerous training programs both at home and overseas to learn the diplomatic language of regional multilateralism.³¹² As TAKAHARA Akio notes, up until then, “regional approaches [were] not traditional jargon in China’s diplomatic vocabulary.”³¹³ CUI Tiankai speaks of the concerted effort the Chinese have put into this process: “It was a gradual learning process for us, as we needed to become more familiar with how these organizations worked and to learn how to play the game.”³¹⁴ Hence to argue that “social learning” from ASEAN explains China’s behavior in the ARF and ASEAN-led forums, seems to be giving too much agency to ASEAN and not enough to Beijing.

Increasing Chinese Confidence

To the extent that interaction with ASEAN has been successful in ensuring that China returns to the multilateral table, it seems to be working in terms of providing positive feedback and affirmation to Beijing that multilateral diplomacy is producing dividends.³¹⁵ This has increased China’s confidence that the promotion of multilateralism is consistent with its national interest in maintaining regional stability and limiting the operation of the security dilemma. Bolstered by the success of its ASEAN policy, Chinese leaders and scholars have ratcheted up their usage of catch-phrases such as “responsible power”, “win-win”, “good-neighbor diplomacy”, and “peaceful rise.”³¹⁶ The successes in China’s regional policy have ar-

312. For example, since 1997, the Asia department of China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs has sent its officials and academics to the Joint Center for Asia-Pacific Studies in Toronto, Canada for the annual “Canada-China seminar on Asia-Pacific Multilateralism and Cooperative Security (CANCHIS). In this seminar, Southeast Asian scholars have made presentations on terms such as the “ASEAN Way” and “consensus”—terms which up till the mid-1990s were unfamiliar to most Chinese in the foreign policy establishment. Interview with Southeast Asian official and Canadian analyst, January and March 2006.

313. TAKAHARA Akio, “Japan’s Political Response to the Rise of China,” in KOKUBUN Ryosei and WANG Jisi, eds., *The Rise of China and a Changing East Asian Order* (Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange, 2003), p. 164.

314. David Shambaugh, p. 70.

315. In keeping with ASEAN’s culture of voicing praise publicly and expressing unhappiness through private diplomatic channels, ASEAN states have been profuse in their praise for China, particularly when China decided not to devalue the Renminbi during the Asian Financial Crisis. ASEAN has also praised China for signing the Declaration on COC for the SCS, the TAC, for proposing the ASEAN-China FTA and the ARF’s Security Policy Conference, amongst other initiatives.

316. Michael A. Glosny, “Heading Toward a Win-Win Future?: Recent Developments in China’s Policy towards Southeast Asia,” Draft document for *Asian Security*.

guably provided China's foreign ministry—the institution that tends to be more liberal—with more authority over specific foreign policy issues compared to the mid-1990s.³¹⁷ According to ZHANG Yunling, China's regional strategy used to be directed by a sense of fear, but “the process of engaging regional forums has greatly increased China's confidence in its ability to construct a regional environment suited to its interests. China is now confident that it can mould its environment.”³¹⁸ Indeed all the participants at the 2005 Chinese forum, “Multilateralism and Chinese Diplomacy,”—including numerous analysts known to be skeptics of liberal institutional theory—came to the conclusion that multilateralism is in China's national interests; the question for them was how the efficacy of such mechanisms could be increased.³¹⁹ The writings of a number of Chinese analysts reflect this self-assuredness in the pragmatism of China's current regional strategy. NIU Jun and LAN Jianxue for example, assert: “As China's relations with its neighbors become closer, as multilateral security structures in the region develop, and as Sino-American relations become more stable, the traditional bilateral security architecture's ability to hedge against and contain China will gradually weaken.”³²⁰ Similarly, ZHANG Yunling and TANG Shiping note, “States conduct diplomacy based on their self-images. . . [China] no longer views itself as a country on the edge of collapse, but as a rising power, with limited but increasingly significant capacity in shaping its environment.”³²¹

Although China may not be exhibiting revisionist desires now, the fear that skeptics hold is that China is conforming to regional norms to facilitate its rise; but having risen, it will abandon the fic-

See also XIAO Huanrong; FANG Hua; LI Qingsi; MENG Xiangqing; CAO Yunhua and XU Shanbao, “Mulin Waijiao Zhengce yu Zhongguo-Dongmeng Guanxi,” [Good-Neighbor Diplomacy and China-ASEAN relations], *Dangdai Yatai* [Contemporary Asia-Pacific], No. 2 (2004); PING Zhaokui, “Zhongguo yu Yazhou: ‘Heping Jueqi’ yu Waijiao Xin Siwei,” [China and Asia: “Peaceful Rise” and New Diplomatic Thinking], *Shijie Zhishi* [World Affairs], No. 5 (2004).

317. Personal conversation with Thomas Christensen, March 2006.

318. ZHANG Yunling (2005). See also TANG Shiping, p. 15.

319. LI Jingzhi is the Dean of the School of International Studies at Renmin University of China. LI Jingzhi, “Duobian Zhuyi yu Zhongguo Waijiao,” [Multilateralism and Chinese Diplomacy], p. 27.

320. LAN Jianxue is a researcher at IAPS, CASS. Niu Jun and Lan Jianxue, “Zhongmei Guanxi yu Dongya Heping,” [China-U.S. Relations and Peace in East Asia], in YAN Xuetong and JIN Dexiang, chief eds., p. 70-1.

321. ZHANG Yunling and TANG Shiping, “More Self-Confident China will be a Responsible Power,” *The Straits Times* (Singapore), October 2, 2002.

tion of cooperation.³²² However, thus far there seems to be several indicators within the ARF suggesting that Beijing's self-assuredness in a rising China that behaves responsibly seems to have a constitutive effect on its policy decisions. Having stressed that participation in international and regional institutions is a marker of China's status as a responsible major power, Chinese leaders do not want to be perceived as obstructing legitimate policies within multilateral institutions.³²³ "Social backpatting" and "social opprobrium" are therefore important incentives/disincentives for China's cooperation that should not be underestimated.³²⁴

The importance of social backpatting in shaping China's policy considerations can be seen in the frequency by which Chinese analysts cite positive appraisals of Beijing's current regional approach.³²⁵ This concern with maintaining a positive image may have tilted the balance in favor of certain policies which impose limits on autonomy or costs on power, such as preventive diplomacy (PD). Worried that the development of PD will give the ARF the power to interfere in China's domestic affairs and threaten its national sovereignty,³²⁶ China has consistently been reluctant to allow the ARF to move from the CBM to PD stage.

However the ARF has made progress—albeit painstakingly slow progress—on PD issues. Considering that the ARF works by following the lowest common denominator on an issue, the fact that this institutional adjustment can occur suggests that China has given the nod to the idea of the ARF moving toward the PD stage.³²⁷ In 2005 the ARF decided to establish the ISG on CBMs and PD to

322. For example, see Michael Vatikiotis and Murray Hiebert, "How China is Building an Empire," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, November 20, 2003. See also Avery Goldstein, (2004).

323. Alastair Iain Johnston, "Legitimacy, Foreign Policy and the Sources of Realpolitik," p. 21. See also Alastair Iain Johnston and Paul Evans, p. 252. For an analysis of how multilateralism highlights China's rise as a responsible power, see MENG Xiangqing, p. 27.

324. *Ibid.*

325. For examples, see WEI Hong, "Zhongguo-Dongmeng Hezuo yu Dongya Yitihua," [China-ASEAN Cooperation and East Asian Integration], *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi* [Contemporary International Relations], No. 9 (2005), p. 24; LI Qingsi, p. 32.

326. SHI Yongming, Dongya Diqu Luntan yu Yufang Waijiao," [The ASEAN Regional Forum and Preventive Diplomacy], *Guoji Wenti Yanjiu* [International Security], No. 2 (1998), p. 31.

327. The ARF is committed to establishing a multilateral security system that develops through three stages: beginning with the establishment of CBMs, then moving on to PD before reaching conflict resolution. See "The ASEAN Regional Forum: A Concept Paper," (1995). Available at <http://www.aseansec.org/3826.htm>.

replace the present ISG on CBMs.³²⁸ China also recommended the development of PD in 2005, albeit without relinquishing its insistence on protecting sovereignty and taking a gradualist approach. China's contribution to the 2005 ASEAN Security Outlook urged:

Confidence-building runs through the whole process of ARF and has all along been a focus of its dialogue and cooperation. *At the same time, however*, ARF should also devote some of its discussions to preventive diplomacy. That is, on the basis of respecting the sovereignty of all countries, to gradually work out ways and means of cooperation in preventive diplomacy that take into consideration both the characteristics and the practical needs of the region.³²⁹

The importance of "social opprobrium" in Beijing's multilateral policy calculations is reflected in its opposition toward having the ARF discuss the South China Sea issue. Even after realizing that the "ASEAN Way" upon which the ARF operated stripped the forum of any power to interfere in regional affairs, China continued to express its aversion to having the SCS issue raised.³³⁰ As Yuen Foong KHONG points out, though the ARF does not have the mandate to impose material punishments on its participants, it is "in the business of preventing 'cheating'" by highlighting public inconsistency between word and deed.³³¹ China remained uncomfortable with the idea of the ARF mentioning the SCS issue because "it would be damaging to China's credibility to verbally agree something in the ARF context and then be seen as doing another on the shoals of the South China Sea."³³²

328. Though no concrete PD mechanisms are in place, the fact that China has allowed the ARF to charge the ISGs on CBMs with PD reflects a concession on China's part. "Chairman's Statement of the Twelfth Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum," Vientiane, July 29, 2005. Available at <http://www.aseansec.org/17642.htm>.

329. Emphasis added. "Annual Security Outlook," 12th ASEAN Regional Forum, Vientiane, Laos (2005), p. 27. Available at <http://www.aseansec.org/arf/aso-2005.pdf>.

330. Prior to the 1999 ARF meeting, China approached the Singapore Chairperson to ask that Singapore keep the SCS issue out of the ARF agenda. Interview with Southeast Asian MOFA official, March 2006.

331. Yuen Foong KHONG, "Coping with Strategic Uncertainty: The Role of Institutions and Soft Balancing in Southeast Asia's Post-Cold War Strategy," in J.J. Suh, Peter J. Katzenstein, and Allen Carlson, eds., p. 200-1.

332. *Ibid.*

VI. Conclusion

China's behavior in the ARF underscores the point that Chinese elites regard multilateralism as an instrument in their diplomatic toolbox to hedge against what they perceive is a possible U.S. containment strategy in the future. Through their interaction within the ARF, the Chinese have also seen the utility of a selective embrace of certain aspects of security multilateralism, such as non-traditional security concerns that include avian flu and piracy. The next chapter will examine how China is crafting multilateral approaches to shape a region that will be conducive to its rise.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ASEAN-CHINA FTA AND THE EAST ASIA SUMMIT

I. ASEAN-China Free Trade Agreement

One hypothetical explanation for China's increasing interest in regional cooperation is that as China's economy develops and as its integration with the region increases, Beijing will naturally seek regional "win-win" arrangements to facilitate its rise.³³³ Following this logic, Chinese analysts often present the ACFTA as a scheme that makes perfect economic sense, given the burgeoning trade between China and ASEAN.³³⁴ ASEAN is currently China's fifth largest trading partner, fifth export destination, and third import source. Table 4.1 highlights the importance of ASEAN-China trade to Beijing:

Table 4.1: China's Top Ten Trading Partners³³⁵

Unit: US\$100,000,000

Overall Trade		Exports		Imports	
Partner	Amount	Partner	Amount	Partner	Amount
EU	2,173.1	USA	1,629.0	Japan	1,004.5
USA	2,116.3	EU	1,437.1	ROK	768.2
Japan	1,844.4	Hong Kong	1,244.8	ASEAN	750.0
Hong Kong	1,367.1	Japan	839.9	Taiwan	746.8
ASEAN	1,303.7	ASEAN	553.7	EU	736.0
ROK	1,119.3	ROK	351.1	USA	487.3
Taiwan	912.3	Taiwan	165.5	Australia	161.9
Russia	291.0	Russia	132.1	Russia	158.9
Australia	272.5	Canada	116.5	Saudi Arabia	122.5
Canada	191.7	Australia	110.6	Hong Kong	122.3

333. HU Angang and MEN Honghua, "Yanjiu Zhongguo Dongya Yitijia Zhanlue de Zhongyao Yiyi," [Examining the Important Meaning of China's East Asian Integration Strategy], *Guoji Guancha* [International Survey], No. 3 (2005), p. 27.

334. See for example, REN Xiao, "Building Peace and Prosperity through Cooperation: China and Southeast Asia in the 21st Century," in Sasakawa Peace Foundation U.S.A. Program, "Asian Voices: Promoting Dialogue Between the U.S. and Asia," November 3, 2005. Available at <http://www.spfusa.org/Program/av2005/110305.pdf>. REN Xiao is Senior Fellow and Director of the Asia-Pacific Studies Department of the Shanghai Institute for International Studies.

335. Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, "Top Ten Trading Partners (2005/01-12)," March 21, 2006. Available at <http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/article/statistic/ie/200603/20060301722237.html>; "Top Ten Export Markets (2005/01-

Though a liberal theory of economic interdependence justifies an ACFTA, it does not provide sufficient explanation for Beijing's strong advocacy of its proposal. First, China accrues minimal benefits in comparison to other FTA alternatives. The ASEAN-China Expert Group on Economic Cooperation reported in 2001 that an ACFTA would increase ASEAN's real GDP by 0.9 per cent and China's real GDP by only 0.27 per cent.³³⁶ A China-ASEAN FTA would produce the least economic benefit for China compared to other kinds of regional liberalization, such as APEC, an East Asian FTA or a China-Japan-South Korea FTA.³³⁷ Standard economic analysis also suggests that China would gain most by establishing an FTA with Japan and South Korea that excluded ASEAN.³³⁸ Second, though China markets the ACFTA as a win-win opportunity, it remains unclear whether ASEAN will be a true beneficiary of the arrangement. According to Wong and Chan, the two economies have a relatively low level of trade interdependence, so even as bilateral trade grows, the ACFTA is unlikely to reduce the competitive elements in China-ASEAN relations.³³⁹ They predict that as China rapidly industrializes, its trade expansion will displace ASEAN exports in developed markets such as the U.S. and Japan.³⁴⁰

Shaping the Regional Environment

A more compelling explanation for China's ACFTA initiative is that China is using multilateral cooperation to reassure its neighbors and ensure that they have a stake in China's stability. In doing so, China hopes that its neighbors will be tempted against forming

12)," March 21, 2006. Available at <http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/aarticle/statistic/ie/200603/20060301722356.html>; "Top Ten Import Sources (2005/01-12)," March 21, 2006. Available at <http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/aarticle/statistic/ie/200603/20060301722415.html>.

336. ASEAN-China Expert Group on Economic Cooperation, "Forging Closer ASEAN-China Economic Relations in the Twenty-First Century: A Report Submitted by the ASEAN-China Expert Group on Economic Cooperation," (October 2001), p. 31 and p. 152. Available at http://www.aseansec.org/newdata/asean_chi.pdf.

337. Robert Scollay and John P. Gilbert, *New Regional Trading Arrangements in the Asia Pacific?* (Washington D.C.: Institute for International Economics, 2001).

338. Thomas G. Moore, "China's International Relations: The Economic Dimension," in Samuel S. Kim, ed., *The International Relations of Northeast Asia* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004), p. 130.

339. John Wong and Sarah Chan, "China-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement: Shaping Future Economic Relations," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (2003), p. 517-19.

340. *Ibid.*

an anti-China coalition with the U.S. This argument is not meant to dispel that which argues for economic complementarity between China and ASEAN. It is indeed true that China sees a great deal of economic complementarities with Southeast Asia, particularly in terms of energy and raw materials. As the assembly center of East Asia, China obtains most of the raw material necessary for the manufactures it sends to top export markets such as the U.S. and Japan from Southeast Asia. However China was *primarily* motivated by political—not economic—considerations when it proposed the formation of an ACFTA.³⁴¹

Beijing is well aware that particularly since its accession to the WTO in 2001, ASEAN has increasingly viewed China as an economic threat and blamed its economic woes on Beijing's economic growth.³⁴² In addition, Beijing is worried that "international forces"—read the U.S.—will play up ASEAN's woes as further evidence of the "China threat" and seize the opportunity to strengthen relations along China's periphery.³⁴³ Instead of trying to reassure ASEAN countries by telling them that their worries are unfounded, Chinese scholars are openly acknowledging the challenges ASEAN will face as China's market grows.³⁴⁴ CAO Yunhua and ZHANG

341. Every Southeast Asian official and scholar I interviewed (18 in total) agreed that China's proposal of the ACFTA was primarily motivated by political reasons rather than economic ones. August 2005 and January 2005.

342. Where FDI is concerned, China is attracting massive inflows, whereas ASEAN's inflows remain relatively stagnant. In the early 1990s, China received 18 per cent of the investment going to Asian developing countries and ASEAN received 61 per cent, but by the decade's end these proportions had reversed. For figures, see Lyall Breckon, "China-Southeast Asia Relations: A Lull, and Some Complaints," in Pacific Forum, CSIS, *Comparative Connections*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (April 2004), p. 69. Available at <http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/0401q.pdf>. However FDI inflows are not zero-sum: an increase in FDI inflows to China—particularly FDI for manufactured goods—can increase Chinese imports from ASEAN because Southeast Asia provides much of the energy and raw material for these goods. Interview with Kenneth Lieberthal, March 2006. Even so, what matters in China-ASEAN relations is ASEAN's *perception* that China is taking away FDI that would otherwise go to Southeast Asia, and China's *perception* that ASEAN worries about this trend.

343. SHENG Lijun, "China-ASEAN Free Trade Area: Origins, Developments, and Strategic Motivations," Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, International Politics and Security Issues, Working Paper No. 1 (2003).

344. CAO Yunhua, "Dongmeng yu Daguo Guanxi Pingxi," [An Analysis of ASEAN's Relations With the Great Powers], *Guoji Zhengzhi Yanjiu* [Studies of International Politics], No. 2 (May 2003), p. 128; CHEN Fengjun, "Jiaqiang Zhongguo yu Dongmeng Hezuo de Zhanlue Yiyi" [Strengthening the Strategic Meaning of China's Cooperation with ASEAN], *Guoji Zhengzhi Yanjiu* [Studies of International Politics], Vol. 1 (February 2004), p. 24; ZHANG Yunling (2003), p. 303.

Yunling for example, frankly admit that a number of Southeast Asian officials worry that China's cheaper products squeeze out those of ASEAN's from American and Japanese markets, and that much of the foreign direct investment that China is receiving would have gone to ASEAN.³⁴⁵

Apart from openly acknowledging the regional disruptions that its development is causing, Beijing is taking concrete measures like the ACFTA to reassure ASEAN that China's economic development brings benefits to all. To the surprise of his counterparts at the ASEAN-China Summit in November 2000, Chinese Premier ZHU Rongji proposed the creation of a free trade area between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations within ten years.³⁴⁶ This was later signed in November 2002 during the ASEAN-China summit in Phnom Penh, creating the largest free trade area in the world with a regional gross domestic product of US \$2 trillion.³⁴⁷

Revealing its new sensitivity to ASEAN's persistent uneasiness over Chinese intentions and competitiveness, China accommodated their concerns by offering a number of "sweeteners": an "early harvest" provision that gives ASEAN a quick reduction of tariffs on a number of goods, including partial liberalization of its agricultural sector (0% by 2005).³⁴⁸ And befitting its rise as an economic power, China's most significant concessions went to ASEAN's poorest members, the CLMV (Cambodia Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam) states offering them Most Favored Nation (MFN) status as well as "special and differential treatment and flexibility in implementation."³⁴⁹

Chinese elites are also trying to dispel the idea that the FDI China is attracting away from ASEAN will necessarily be to the detriment of its neighbors' economies. They argue that as China's economy develops, Beijing will increase its FDI to ASEAN to make up for the loss. According to ZHANG Yunling, ASEAN will be the first place that Chinese companies will go to make their investments.³⁵⁰ At the 2003 APT summit in Bali, Premier WEN Jiabao also promised that Beijing will actively direct Chinese FDI

345. CAO Yunhua (2003), p. 127-8.

346. Robert Sutter, p. 182. ASEAN states were "shocked" to receive China's proposal and unsure of how to react. See "China's Free Trade Proposal Shocked ASEAN," *Agence France-Presse*, March 15, 2002.

347. CHUA Lee Hoong, "China-ASEAN Pact—A Landmark Agreement?" *The Straits Times (Singapore)*, November 4, 2002.

348. Ba, p. 641.

349. *Ibid.*

350. See ZHANG Yunling (2003), p. 311.

toward ASEAN, declaring that FDI flows to ASEAN were already growing at an annual rate of 20 per cent, and as much as 40 per cent in some countries.³⁵¹

These measures are designed to present China as a responsible power that will not undermine its neighbors' interests. Chinese analysts often emphasize the benevolent nature of the concessions that China has made for its smaller neighbors. As WEI Hong asserts, "In order to eliminate ASEAN states' anxieties, China emphasized equal, pragmatic, and mutually beneficial principles during negotiations over the ACFTA. By giving way and sacrificing, China managed to show its great power status."³⁵²

Chinese analysts would like to argue that China's cooperativeness is a result of its position as a responsible, benevolent great power. However the extent to which these steps are wholly altruistic is questionable. There is some evidence that China is capable of using ASEAN's dependence on Chinese markets as political leverage when the need arises. According to a well-placed Southeast Asian MOFA official, when Japan made its bid to enter the U.N. Security Council in 2005, China warned Southeast Asian countries that they should abstain from supporting Japan by "reminding them of China's magnificent market and how much they potentially stand to lose were they to offend China."³⁵³ China's message was extremely clear in its subtlety: "The Chinese know that they don't need to belabor the point that they have power, they don't need to do any fist-clenching or chest-pounding. They know that others will have to adjust to the political reality of a 900-pound gorilla breathing next to you."³⁵⁴

In fact, there is also some evidence that mere interaction with China is causing ASEAN to take China's interest into account *without* any effort on the part of Beijing. According to another well-placed Southeast Asian MOFA official, a number of states in Southeast Asia—not merely the CLMV states which, for geographical and historical reasons, pay close attention to Beijing—are "beginning to define their interests in terms of what Chinese interests are."³⁵⁵ One finds that Beijing often knows of ASEAN's internal decisions even before ASEAN itself has come to a consensus, be-

351. Jane Perlez, "China Promises More Investment in Southeast Asia," *New York Times*, October 8, 2003.

352. WEI Hong, p. 23-4.

353. Interview with Southeast Asian MOFA official, March 2006.

354. Ibid.

355. Interview with Southeast Asian MOFA official, January 2006.

cause a number of ASEAN states report the likely outcomes of meetings to Beijing.³⁵⁶

By encouraging integration between Chinese and Southeast Asian markets, China is increasing the likelihood that ASEAN states will take China's interests into account without Beijing having to resort to coercive military gestures.³⁵⁷ This "economic statecraft"—the art of utilizing economic tools such as resources and capital to advance a state's interests through policies that are less coercive than military power—increases the stakes that ASEAN has in Beijing's continued development, and ensures that China's southern flank will be reluctant, if not adverse, to the idea of bandwagoning with the U.S. and its allies against Beijing.³⁵⁸ As Singapore Prime Minister GOH Chok Tong states in his observation that China intends to use economic diplomacy to build multilateral frameworks benign to its national interests: "China realizes that it is a huge elephant, and even if it treads softly, it can still shake the ground."³⁵⁹

Beijing's ability to assert influence over ASEAN states without much effort suggests that the persuasion that constructivists raise as a microprocess of socializing China through interactions within the ARF and with ASEAN states needs to be reviewed. As Checkel notes, models which theorize social interaction often do so in a unidirectional way: they allow for preference change at the "receiving end"—the persuadee (China)—but do not explicitly consider the reverse process, whereby the persuader's (ASEAN's) own preferences are changed by the interaction process.³⁶⁰ Although Alice Ba addresses this gap in the theoretical literature by showing how ASEAN has become "more receptive" to China's recent gestures to reassure it of its benign intentions,³⁶¹ this observation is different from the above, which shows that a few ASEAN states are not only changing their perceptions of China, they are reshaping their inter-

356. *Ibid.*

357. Albert Hirschman examined how a government can use foreign trade and investment as tools to expand a nation's power. See Albert O. Hirschman, *National Power and the Structure of Foreign Trade* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

358. For a classic on the concept of economic statecraft, see David A. Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).

359. Quoted in Michael Vatikiotis and Murray Hiebert (2003), p. 31.

360. Jeffrey T. Checkel, "Why Comply? Social Norms and the Study of International Institutions," May 15, 2000. Available at http://www.arena.uio.no/events/papers/IDNET_Checkel.pdf.

361. Alice D. Ba (2006), p. 173.

ests along that of China's. This is not to say however, that ASEAN is about to bandwagon with China in the near future — far from it. Most of Southeast Asia remains wary of Chinese designs and influence. Nonetheless, there is an emerging trend of states being attracted to Chinese power.³⁶²

II. East Asia Summit

China's negotiating behavior in the lead-up to the inaugural December 2005 East Asia Summit (EAS) provides an example of how China uses multilateral cooperation to shape a regional environment that maximizes its influence. By selectively throwing its weight behind certain forums—the EAS before Beijing realized that its members would expand beyond that of the APT, and the APT after it realized that the EAS was to include non-APT countries—China has successfully managed to establish that the emphasis on the organizational future of East Asia will rest on the APT.

Among all the ASEAN-led forums in East Asia (excluding the ASEAN-China mechanisms), China is most interested in the APT.³⁶³ As the sole forum that excludes the U.S. and brings together Asian countries only, the APT provides China with a larger voice in determining regional affairs.³⁶⁴ Chinese analysts agree that such cooperation between East Asian states “can weaken U.S. balancing strategy towards China, and weaken the reliance that China's neighbors have on the U.S.”³⁶⁵

362. Interview with Southeast Asian official, January 2006.

363. For examples of arguments that place the APT at the core of East Asian cooperation, see TIAN Zhongqing, “Dongya Hezuo yu Zhongguo de Zhanlue Liyi,” [East Asian Cooperation and China's Strategic Interest,” *Dangdai Yatai* [Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies], No. 5 (2003), p. 43; TIAN Zhongqing, “Shilun ‘Dongya Gongtongti’,” *Dangdai Yatai* [Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies], No. 10 (2004), p. 16; SU Hao, “Diqu Zhuyi yu Dongya Quyu Hezuo Jizhi de Jianli,” [Regionalism and the Establishment of East Asian Cooperative Structures], *Waijiao Xueyuan Xuebao* [Journal of Foreign Affairs College], No. 1 (2003), p. 20; LU Jianren and WANG Xuhui, “Dongya Jingji Hezuo de Jingzhan Jiqi Dui Diqu Jingji Zengzhang de Yingxiang,” [Developments in East Asian Economic Cooperation and its Influence on Regional Economic Growth], *Dangdai Yatai* [Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies], No. 2 (2005), p. 2-4; WANG Qingdong, “Lun Dongya Xin Diqu Zhuyi,” [A Discussion of the New East Asian Regionalism], *Dangdai Yatai* [Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies], No. 1 (2003), p. 56-7.

364. Interview with Chinese analysts, January 2006.

365. “Dongya Fenghui yu Quyu Zhenhe de Shenhua,” [The East Asia Summit and the Deepening Regional Integration], *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi* [Contemporary International Relations], No. 3 (2005), p. 44.

However, ASEAN leads the APT. Early discussions suggested that the EAS could provide China with a more equal playing field compared to the APT, because the EAS will no longer be ASEAN-led.³⁶⁶ Hence when the idea of upgrading the APT process into the EAS was first mooted, China immediately expressed strong interest and even offered to host the second EAS meeting.³⁶⁷ ZANG Xiuling highlights China's initial calculations in reworking the APT to form the EAS:

The current APT structure is not conducive to the equal participation of all countries. Hence we should change the APT process to the EAS. Though EAS participants will be the same as those in the APT, the status of these thirteen participants will be more equal. Hosting of the Summit will not be limited to only ASEAN members; all thirteen members can take turns to host it. In this way, all participants will have the opportunity to convene the summit, and enjoy equal participation in the regional cooperation process.³⁶⁸

Exhorting China to "grasp the opportunity" to participate in regional multilateralism as a more equal player, TIAN Zhongqing writes: "Even though there are many useful aspects of the APT, in the long run this forum will have more costs than benefits. It is about time that we set up an East Asian Summit."³⁶⁹

The official Chinese position on participation in the EAS and the region more broadly is that China welcomes an open, inclusive form of regionalism. In a bid to soothe U.S. concerns of East Asia becoming a closed regional bloc a month before the EAS, State Councilor TANG Jiaxuan declared, "Currently, some Western countries have numerous reservations and prejudices towards East Asian economic cooperation. I want to make a very clear statement here: Friends, do not have any reservations or uncertainties. We welcome you to participate in bringing peace and prosperity to East

366. Interview with Chinese analysts, January 2006.

367. China's enthusiasm caught regional actors off guard. See Hadi SOESASTRO, "East Asia: Many Clubs, Little Progress," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. 169, No. 1 (January/February 2006), p. 50.

368. ZANG Xiuling is associate professor at Shandong University's Institute of Contemporary Socialism. Zang Xiuling, "Dongya Diqu Zhuyi Jiqi Fazhan Qushi—Yi '10+3' Hezuo Jizhi Wei Shijiao," [East Asian Regionalism and Development Trends—Viewing from the "10+3" Angle], *Dangdai Yatai* [Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies], No. 9 (2004), p. 36.

369. TIAN Zhongqing (2004), p. 16.

Asia.”³⁷⁰ The Chinese also specifically declared that they welcome America’s participation, and that should the U.S. want to join, “there is no hurdle at all as it only needs to meet the very loose conditions listed by ASEAN.”³⁷¹

However during the APT discussions on EAS membership, China displayed a clear preference for keeping non-APT countries, particularly the U.S., out of the EAS.³⁷² According to a Southeast Asian MOFA official, China “did try its hardest to influence ASEAN’s position, particularly through proxies like Malaysia and Thailand.”³⁷³ The writings of Chinese analysts prior to ASEAN’s decision on EAS membership also show that Beijing desired to have the U.S. absent from what it perceived as a legitimate gathering of East Asian states. In a discussion on China’s multilateral diplomacy, WANG Jisi strongly asserts, “The U.S. definitely cannot be invited to the EAS. Multilateralism cannot have unlimited openness; there must be some limits to participation.”³⁷⁴ Similarly, SU Hao cautions against expanding the EAS: “China hopes to strengthen the APT, but if the EAS does open itself up, and if countries outside East Asia join, then this regional cooperation will be extremely hard to conduct. Inclusiveness must have its limits.”³⁷⁵ Only after it became clear that the main condition for participation in the Summit was for the state to be a signatory of ASEAN’s TAC, did China begin publicly issuing invitations to the U.S.³⁷⁶ The Chinese are well aware that U.S. participation in the EAS under this condition is far from being “no hurdle at all.” Because the core principle of ASEAN’s TAC is non-interference in the internal affairs of other signatory states, the U.S. has no interest in acceding to

370. Clarissa Oon, “West is welcome in ASEAN Plus 3: China,” *The Straits Times* (Singapore), November 1, 2005.

371. PANG Zhongying, “Kaifang Diqu Zhuyi de Huoli,” [The Vitality of Open Regionalism], *Renmin Ribao*, December 12, 2002. Available at <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/54816/54828/3935044.html>.

372. Interview with Southeast Asian officials and analysts, January 2006.

373. Interview with Southeast Asian official, January 2006.

374. WANG Jisi, “Duobian Zhuyi yu Zhongguo Waijiao,” [Multilateralism and Chinese Diplomacy], p. 11.

375. SU Hao is Deputy Director for the East Asian Research Center at the Foreign Affairs University of China, Beijing. SU Hao, “Duobian Zhuyi yu Zhongguo Waijiao,” [Multilateralism and Chinese Diplomacy], p. 12.

376. Signing ASEAN’s TAC was one of three conditions set by ASEAN. The other two are as follows: the country must have a substantive relationship with ASEAN, and must be ASEAN’s dialogue partner.

the agreement.³⁷⁷ China can well afford to be generous, given that the U.S. had precluded itself from being a participant.

Chinese analysts often highlight Beijing's decision to allow ASEAN determine the Summit's make-up as an example of how China disavows regional leadership [*bu dangtou*].³⁷⁸ Whether this surrender of leadership to ASEAN reflects benign self-restraint however, is doubtful. Beijing stopped pressing ASEAN about restricting the membership scope only after it realized that ASEAN states such as Indonesia and Singapore were determined to back Japan in inviting countries such as India, New Zealand, and Australia to the Summit.³⁷⁹ Once it realized that an enlarged EAS membership was going to dilute its influence, Beijing deftly changed tactics. Essentially, it exerted influence on the discussion by *not* exerting influence: by surrendering the outcome of the EAS to ASEAN, Beijing signaled that it had lost interest in the EAS. The Chinese calculate that a forum led by ASEAN but lacking full support from Beijing will have little effect on regional affairs. Indeed, Chinese analysts often emphasize that though ASEAN may be "in the driver's seat" of regional multilateral forums, its ability to make a difference is severely limited without China's backing.³⁸⁰ By acceding leadership to ASEAN, Beijing could present itself as a "good neighbor" as well as assuage regional concerns that it desires to seek regional leadership.

Hence though at first glance it may seem as if the advocates for open regionalism won the day because the EAS was designated an open forum, by the end of the December EAS meeting, China was arguably the top dog. Together with Malaysia, which was a strong advocate of an APT-members-only EAS, China worked assiduously to vest the APT with the main mission of creating an East Asia Community (EAC), relegating the EAS to a non-essential role.³⁸¹ Thus China was able to have its cake and eat it: as LU Jianren puts it, China successfully secured the APT as the "main channel [*zhu qudao*]" for East Asian cooperation, promoted itself

377. The U.S. was not enthusiastic about attending the EAS for a number of other reasons, such as the President's busy schedule and its intention to isolate the Myanmar regime. Personal conversation with Thomas Christensen, February 2006.

378. This was a persistent comment in my interviews with Chinese analysts and MOFA officials in Beijing, January 2006.

379. Interview with Southeast Asian analysts and officials, January and March 2006.

380. See for example, TANG Jianguo, p. 63; WEI Hong, p. 21; YU Yingli, p. 36.

381. Alan D. Romberg, "The East Asia Summit: Much Ado about Nothing—So Far," Freeman Report, Center for Strategic and International Studies (December 2005). Available at <http://www.stimson.org/pub.cfm?id=264>.

as a strong supporter of regional “openness” and “transparency,” all the while “increasing its influence over regional affairs.”³⁸²

China’s EAS strategy suggests that Beijing is adopting and adapting ASEAN’s multilateral vocabulary for the purpose of increasing its own leverage in the region. One may therefore be tempted to view China’s diplomacy in zero-sum terms—that is, China is trying to simultaneously increase its influence, undermine that of the U.S., and establish itself as the hegemonic power of East Asia.³⁸³ Though a study of the negotiations over the EAS reveals that China is pursuing the former, there is little evidence to support the latter two. First, China is not trying to evict the U.S. from the region. As one Chinese analyst argues, China engages its neighbors in Asian frameworks such as the APT, but also engages the U.S. in Asia-Pacific forums such as the ARF and APEC.³⁸⁴ China’s desire to court its neighbors within its own turf is a legitimate one—even the U.S., the world’s superpower, reacts negatively to Beijing’s attempts to forge friendly relations in Latin America, which is perceived as Washington’s backyard.³⁸⁵ Second, as the previous chapter has argued, Chinese elites know that for the foreseeable future, they do not have the ability to decrease U.S. presence or be a hegemon. What they are trying to do instead is to combine bilateral advances with cooperative multilateral diplomacy to build close neighborly ties that will *maximize* Chinese influence and options in the region.

382. LU Jianren, “Dongya Fenghui, Zhongguo Diwei Nan Handong,” [The East Asia Summit: China’s Position is Hard to Shake,” *Xinhua News*, December 15, 2005. Available at http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2005-12/15/content_3924348.htm.

383. For example, see Dana Dillon and John J Tkacik Jr., “China’s Quest for Asia,” *Policy Review*, No. 134 (December 2005/January 2006).

384. Interview with Chinese analyst, January 2006.

385. *Ibid.*

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

If the argument presented in this paper holds water, the change in China's attitude towards multilateral cooperation in 1996/1997, and its continued interest in pursuing multilateralism today, has been, and will be, motivated by Beijing's desire to hedge against potential U.S. pressure. This is not to deny that a more constructivist view of Beijing's intentions is incorrect, but at this time the extent to which China subscribes itself to multilateralism seems to be tactical and issue-specific. Thus one finds Beijing with a more nuanced understanding of multilateralism that cuts along functional lines: it is most enthused about economic cooperation, because globalization and economic interdependency require Beijing to pursue regional arrangements that will protect China from financial crises, and least enthused about multilateral negotiations on issues that may impinge upon its sovereignty.

That Beijing's exercise of multilateralism is thus piecemeal, even though the "ASEAN Way" that Iain Johnston so lauds for diffusing norms to Chinese leaders involved in the ARF process is present in all four case studies examined above, casts doubt on the hypothesis that social learning, socialization, or persuasion accounts for changes in China's attitude toward multilateralism. These arguments can explain increasing Chinese comfortableness, but they do not account for the strategic shift China made in 1996/1997, or for the spurts of Chinese interest that come after changes in regional alliances have occurred.

ASEAN's role seems to involve providing the social back-patting and opprobrium that signal to Beijing the extent to which its multilateral diplomacy is furthering its goals of improving relations, reassuring neighbors, and forging a positive reputation of self-restraint. China seems to be pursuing this "new diplomacy" because it has been convinced by the positive reactions from its neighbors that multilateralism is a very useful instrument in its diplomatic toolbox.

As the case studies on the ACFTA and the EAS show, there are indications that Beijing's interest in multilateralism is also being motivated by a desire to not simply hedge against U.S. pressure, but to also shape an environment conducive to its rise. So, for hypothetical purposes, if one were to imagine the U.S. as being out of the picture, Beijing would still be interested in using multilateralism to restrain Tokyo's power—if not to isolate it.

China's desire to actively use multilateralism to shape the regional environment does not, however, mean that Beijing is trying to extrude Washington from the region. As this article has tried to show, China's realist activism is defensive in nature: there is no evidence, as of now, that Beijing can, or wants to, exclude the U.S. from Asia or establish itself as a hegemon.³⁸⁶

Policy Implications

Several policy implications flow from the analysis offered above. First, perceptions matter. U.S. policy-makers need to try to understand how Beijing perceives changes in U.S. relations with regional actors. Though U.S. policies towards regional actors may not be directed against China, Beijing may well perceive them as being so; or at minimum, interpret them as having the potential to be so in future when U.S.-China relations deteriorate.

Second, if the argument—that China's interest in multilateralism is primarily driven by changes in regional U.S. alliance patterns which Beijing perceives as having the potential to contain China—is accurate, it suggests that (what Beijing perceives to be) tough U.S. policies, such as increasing U.S. military presence in Central Asia, encouraging Japan to take up a greater burden of the security alliance, or ratcheting relations with countries around China's periphery like India, will catalyze Beijing into behaving more responsibly and reassuringly. In other words, when Chinese leaders fret about the possibility of U.S. encirclement, they tend to turn to regional cooperation as a hedge against an anti-China campaign.

Thus Washington can have its cake and eat it: by strengthening relations with East Asian countries, the U.S. will not only spur China into providing public goods to the region, thereby increasing Beijing's stake in maintaining regional stability; it will tighten its alliances and up its military capabilities, thereby providing its own robust hedge against a revisionist China, in the event it develops into one in future. This prescription in essence is a take on the hubs-and-spokes system: enhancing security ties with traditional U.S. allies such as Japan and Australia, as well as with regional states willing to cooperate with the U.S. on security matters.

The problem with hedging strategies is that they may breed deep distrust and turn the idea of a hegemonic, anti-U.S. China into a self-fulfilling prophecy. To decrease the possibility of this happen-

386. The only issue for which China has expressed its intention of coming to blows with the U.S. is over Taiwan—an issue that this paper does not go into.

ing, credible U.S. toughness and deterrence has to be complemented by credible engagement and reassurances.³⁸⁷

Thus a third policy implication would be for the U.S. to encourage China to continue with its efforts to strengthen relations with its neighbors. By acknowledging mutual interests and responsibilities, the U.S. can signal to China that it recognizes Beijing as a power that contributes to regional stability and prosperity. On this score, the U.S. could make public statements along the lines of Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick's speech in 2005 that welcomed a China that is a "responsible stakeholder" in the international system.³⁸⁸ The Senior Dialogue between Zoellick and his Chinese counterpart, Vice Foreign Minister DAI Bingguo provides a private channel to communicate and implement these aspirations. When it comes to regional forums such as the EAS that do not include the U.S., Washington could signal its interest in a peacefully rising, burden-sharing China by issuing public statements lauding China's role in enhancing East Asia cooperation. Thus far, the issues over which the U.S. has publicly expressed its approval over Chinese multilateral diplomacy have been confined to those that the U.S. needs Beijing's support in—such as combating terrorism and addressing the North Korean nuclear impasse. Expressing its support for Chinese diplomacy in forums like the EAS could help dampen the widening Chinese perception that the U.S. wants China to have a larger voice only in international affairs that the U.S. needs help with.

Fourth, the U.S. should not attempt to undermine the relations East and Southeast Asian countries have with China. Not only would such actions jeopardize U.S.-China relations, they would also severely strain U.S. relations with regional actors. ASEAN states for example, do not want to choose between the U.S. and China. Any attempt to force them to do so may well backfire on Washington.

Fifth, the U.S. should encourage China's participation in multilateral forums, as well as invest—either directly or indirectly—itsself more fully in regional security architecture. China presents complex challenges to the U.S. in ways that previous adversaries such as the

387. Thomas Schelling argues convincingly that an effective diplomatic strategy is comprised of credible assurances *and* deterrence, Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1966).

388. Robert B. Zoellick, "Whither China: From Membership to Responsibility?" Speech to the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations, September 21, 2005. Available at <http://www.state.gov/s/d/rem/53682.htm>.

Soviet Union and Nazi Germany—adversaries of the kind that a containment strategy is designed to tackle—did not. It is a potential future peer competitor, but at the same time it is a strategic partner. This means that addressing the China challenge with bilateral military linkages is inadequate. Enmeshing China in a web of multilateral frameworks could complement the current hubs-and-spokes arrangement. By establishing a myriad of cooperative obligations for Beijing, such frameworks could commit China to the “peaceful rise” path and preclude revisionism. Despite criticisms that ASEAN-led forums are mere talk-shops, regular meetings provide channels of communication that help build mutual trust and confidence, and lend opportunities for cooperation. For such forums to be effective however, U.S. support is critical.

To this end, there are several approaches that the U.S. can take to invest in regional multilateralism. One is to invigorate existing forums such as APEC and the ARF. Though their membership is too broad and their mandates too diffuse to tackle conflicts, these forums can minimize the misperceptions that could slide into one. China has decided that it will put its weight behind the ARF, so if the ARF were able to move toward practical cooperation, such as in the areas of non-traditional security—transnational crime, counter-terrorism, maritime security, disaster relief, and pandemic diseases such as avian flu and SARS—the U.S. would have one standard by which it could measure China’s espoused benign intentions.

A second approach is to gradually institutionalize the North Korea Six-Party Talks into a more permanent, Five-Party one involving the U.S., Japan, South Korea, Russia, and China. Although four rounds of the Six-Party Talks have proved unfruitful in resolving the nuclear conundrum, the dialogue can still be efficacious in providing a direct communication channel for the five countries, creating opportunities to cooperate over shared interests such as energy security. Meetings involving five states are certainly more manageable compared to those of the ARF and APEC.

A third approach is to support the development of forums that do not involve the U.S., such as the APT and the EAS. The worry however, is that these forums could be vehicles for China to assert regional leadership at the expense of the U.S. Encouraging the involvement of U.S. allies such as Japan and Australia however, should balance Chinese power. It should also provide Japan with the opportunity to reconcile itself more fully with its Asian neighbors.

No one forum is perfect; each has its flaws. Given the inadequacies of each mechanism, and the fact that the East Asian security architecture is likely to be a loose patchwork of overlapping arrangements, the idea then is to encourage Chinese participation in each one, with the U.S. maximally involved³⁸⁹ in those for which it qualifies (such as the ARF and the Six-Party Talks), and encouraging U.S. allies' involvement in those for which it does not (such as the APT and EAS).

Finally, policy-makers should note that encouraging China to strengthen its bilateral and multilateral profiles need not threaten U.S. interests in East Asia. A number U.S. analysts baulk at the idea, arguing that doing so would only give China more political leverage and shoot Washington in the foot. This argument however, is narrow. First, it underestimates the extent of relative U.S. power and influence in the region. Regional actors remain wary of Chinese intentions, and recognizing that the U.S. represents the largest outside counterweight to China, they are careful to balance Chinese attentions with American ones. Even as relations with China grew closer after September 11, Southeast Asian nations such as Indonesia, Singapore, the Philippines and Thailand took care to strengthen military links with the U.S.

Second, influence in East Asia is not necessarily a zero-sum game. Chinese influence in Asia will continue to increase (assuming that no crisis over the Taiwan Straits, the economy, or political leadership occurs), but that will not stop U.S. influence from increasing, from a position of much greater strength. In fact, one finds that tables can be easily turned: America's East Asia policy has itself been sharpened by the worry that U.S. influence is being supplanted by Beijing in the aftermath of September 11. That is, perceived increase in Beijing's influence has spurred Washington to pay more attention to the region. For example, following criticism that the U.S. has focused too much on terrorism at the expense of bread-and-butter economic issues close to ASEAN hearts, in contrast to China's "charm offensive" in the region, the U.S. has broadened its engagement of ASEAN.³⁹⁰ At the November 2005 APEC,

389. With its numerous commitments around the globe, U.S. involvement will certainly have its limits. This paper however, postulates that the U.S. still has the capacity to commit itself more deeply to East Asian forums than at present.

390. The U.S. was perceived as snubbing ASEAN when it sent Deputy Secretary Robert Zoellick instead of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to the July 2005 ARF. Zoellick is highly regarded in East Asia due to his experience in FTA and WTO negotiations during his tenure as U.S. Trade Representative. Nevertheless, because impres-

President Bush announced the launch of a “U.S.-ASEAN Enhanced Partnership” that lays the groundwork for a U.S.-ASEAN free trade pact.³⁹¹ In March 2006, Rice paid a two-day visit to Indonesia where she affirmed America’s commitment to Southeast Asia and sought to expand America’s “strategic partnership” with Indonesia, with promises of increasing military cooperation.³⁹² Rice also kept her promise to attend the July 2006 ARF held in Malaysia, despite escalating tensions in the Middle East at that time.³⁹³

If Chinese cooperativeness can prompt the U.S. to be keener in its diplomatic portfolio by keeping Washington on its toes, that will serve America’s own interest in maintaining its East Asian and global preponderance. The delivery of public goods by both the U.S. and China will be a force for peace and stability in the region. The international politics of East Asia remain volatile; a prudent policy is one that recognizes that all powers will benefit from the establishment of a denser network of bilateral relations and multi-lateral forums to complement the U.S. alliance system.

sions matter, Rice’s absence at the ARF set a black mark against U.S. diplomacy. For remarks on ASEAN’s unhappiness over Rice’s absence, see Glenn Kessler, “In Asia, Rice is Criticized for Plan to Skip Summit,” *Washington Post*, July 12, 2005. For former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage’s observation that China’s rise is re-directing U.S. attention to ASEAN, see Bhagyashree Garekar, “China’s Rise Prompts U.S. to ‘Re-energize’ S-E Asia Ties,” *The Straits Times (Singapore)*, June 3, 2006. For similar comments by Singapore Ambassador to U.S. CHAN Heng Chee, see Eugene Low, “U.S.-China Ties ‘Crucial to Asia,’” *The Straits Times (Singapore)*, May 20, 2006. Also, see Eugene Low, “U.S. Stepping Up its Engagement in S-E Asia,” *The Straits Times (Singapore)*, August 23, 2006. For reports on how Chinese diplomacy is far more attuned to regional sensitivities compared to the U.S., see Evelyn Goh, “A Chinese Lesson for the U.S.: How to Charm Southeast Asia,” *The Straits Times (Singapore)*, October 31, 2003; Tim Shorrock, “Why Southeast Asia is Turning from U.S. to China,” *Asia Times Online*, December 10, 2005. Available at http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/GL10Ae01.html.

391. “U.S., ASEAN Agree to Push for Trade and Investment Agreement,” *Agence France Presse*, November 18, 2005.

392. Steven R. Weisman, “Rice, in Indonesia, Supports Renewed Military Assistance,” *New York Times*, March 15, 2006. Azhar Ghani, “U.S. Committed to Southeast Asia: Rice,” *The Straits Times (Singapore)*, March 16, 2006.

393. Roger Mitton, “U.S. Woos Vietnam,” *The Straits Times (Singapore)*, July 11, 2006. Rice had also planned on making stops in Vietnam, Japan, China, and South Korea during this period. Unfortunately, because of the unexpected conflict in the Middle East between Israel, Lebanon, and Palestine, Rice had to cancel all stops. See Roger Mitton, “Rice Forced to Shorten Trip to Asia,” *The Straits Times (Singapore)*, July 23, 2006.

APPENDIX

ASEAN-China, ASEAN-Japan, ASEAN-India
and ASEAN-U.S. Mechanisms

Level	China		Japan		India		U.S.
	ASEAN+1 Summit		ASEAN+1 Summit		ASEAN-India Summit		
Leaders Level							ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference (ASEAN PMC) (<i>Foreign Affairs</i>) ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM)-United States Trade Representative Consultations (<i>Commerce</i>)
Ministerial Level	ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference - ASEAN PMC (<i>Foreign Affairs</i>) ASEAN Economic Ministers - Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China (<i>Economic, Trade and Investment</i>)		ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference - ASEAN PMC (<i>Foreign Affairs</i>) ASEAN Economic Ministers - Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) (<i>Economic, Trade and Investment</i>)		ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference (<i>Foreign Affairs</i>) ASEAN Economic Ministers - Ministry of Commerce and Industry of India Consultations (<i>Economic, Trade and Investment</i>)		N/A

Level	China	Japan	India	U.S.
	ASEAN-China Telecom. and IT Ministers' Meeting (<i>Information, Communications and Technology</i>)	ASEAN-Japan Transport Ministerial Meeting (<i>Land, Infrastructure and Transport</i>)	ASEAN-India Tourism Ministers Meeting ³⁹⁴ (<i>Tourism</i>)	
	ASEAN-China Health Ministerial Meeting (<i>Health</i>)			
	ASEAN-China Ministerial Meeting on Youth (<i>Youth</i>)			
	ASEAN-China Transport Ministerial Meeting (<i>Transport</i>)			
Senior Officials' Level	ASEAN-China Senior Officials' Consultation (<i>Foreign Affairs</i>)	ASEAN-Japan Forum (<i>Foreign Affairs</i>)	ASEAN-India Senior Officials' Meeting (<i>Foreign Affairs</i>)	ASEAN-U.S. Dialogue (<i>Foreign Affairs</i>)
	Senior Economic Officials Meeting - Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China (<i>Economic, Trade and Investment</i>)	Senior Economic Officials Meeting - Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (<i>Economic, Trade and Investment</i>)	Senior Economic Officials Meeting - Ministry of Commerce and Industry of India Consultations (<i>Economic, Trade and Investment</i>)	ASEAN Senior Economic Officials (SEOM)-Assistant United States Trade Representative ³⁹⁵ Consultations (<i>Commerce</i>)

394. This is a nascent initiative. Although the mechanism itself is conceptually in place, the India Tourism Minister did not attend the recent ASEAN Tourism Forum in Langkawi, Malaysia in January 2005. As such no ASEAN-India Tourism Ministers Meeting has actually taken place yet.

395. There was neither AEM-USTR nor SEOM-USTR Consultations in 2004 largely because the U.S. and ASEAN were unable to agree on a set of common dates. The last SEOM-USTR Consultations were held in 2003, and the last AEM-USTR Consultations were

Level	China	Japan	India	U.S.
	Senior Officials' Meeting on Transnational Crime + China (<i>Transnational Crime</i>)	Senior Officials' Meeting on Transnational Crime + Japan (<i>Transnational Crime</i>)		ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC)-US Consultation (<i>Transnational Crime</i>)
	ASEAN-China Cooperative Operations in Response to Dangerous Drugs (ACCORD) Task Force on Civic Awareness (<i>Transnational Crime</i>)	Senior Transport Officials' Meeting (<i>Land, Infrastructure and Transport</i>)		
	ACCORD Task Force on Demand Reduction (<i>Transnational Crime</i>)	ASEAN-Japan Exchange Programme and ASEAN-Japan General Exchange Fund Management Committees Meetings		
	ACCORD Task Force on Law Enforcement (<i>Transnational Crime</i>)			
	ACCORD Task Force on Alternative Development (<i>Transnational Crime</i>)			
	ACCORD Joint Task Forces Meeting ACCORD (<i>Transnational Crime</i>)			
	Telecommunication Senior Officials' Meeting			

held in 2002. In contrast, AEM and SEOM meetings with the other Dialogue Partners including China, Japan and India have been taking place annually.

Level	China	Japan	India	U.S.
	(<i>ICT</i>) Senior Transport Officials' Meeting (<i>Transport</i>) Senior Officials' Meeting on Health (<i>Health</i>) Senior Officials Meeting on Youth (<i>Youth</i>) ASEAN-China Joint Cooperation Committee (<i>Foreign Affairs</i>)	ASEAN-Japan Expanded Consultative Meeting (<i>Foreign Affairs</i>)	ASEAN-India Joint Cooperation Committee (<i>Foreign Affairs</i>)	ASEAN-U.S. Informal Coordinating Mechanism (ICM) (<i>Foreign Affairs</i>)
Director-Generals' Level	ASEAN-China Trade Negotiating Committee (<i>Economic, Trade and Investment</i>) ASEAN-China Trade Negotiating Committee (<i>Science and Technology</i>)	ASEAN-Japan Committee on Closer Economic Partnership (AJCCEP) (<i>Economic, Trade and Investment</i>)	ASEAN-India Trade Negotiating Committee (<i>Economic, Trade and Investment</i>)	ASEAN Consultative Committee on Standards and Quality (ACCSQ)-U.S. Department of Commerce Meeting (<i>Commerce</i>)
Working Level	ASEAN-China Working Group on Development Cooperation (<i>Foreign Affairs</i>) Working Group on Rules of Origin (<i>Economic, Trade and Investment</i>)	AJCCEP Working Group on Rules of Origin (<i>Economic, Trade and Investment</i>) ASEAN Consultative Committee for Standards and Quality - METI (<i>Economic, Trade and Investment</i>)	ASEAN-India Working Group on Science & Technology (<i>Science and Technology</i>) ASEAN-India Working Group on Transport & Infrastructure (<i>Transport and Infrastructure</i>)	N/A

Level	China	Japan	India	U.S.
	Working Group on Dispute Settlement Mechanism (<i>Economic, Trade and Investment</i>)	ASEAN-METI Economic and Industrial Committee (AMEICC) Working Groups on: Automobile Industry, Chemical Industry, Consumer Electronic Industry, Human Resource Development, SMEs, Supporting Industries, Rural Industries, Textile and Garment Industry, West-East Corridor Development, Statistics (<i>Economic, Trade and Investment</i>)	ASEAN-India Working Group on Development Cooperation (<i>Development Cooperation</i>)	
	Working Group on Services (<i>Economic, Trade and</i>	ASEAN-Japan Agriculture Working-level meetings:	ASEAN-India Working Group on Health and	

Level	China	Japan	India	U.S.
	<i>Investment</i>	ASEAN-Japan Project Multifunctionality on Agriculture in ASEAN Countries Seminar on ASEAN-Japan Cooperation for Sustainable Fisheries through SEAFDEC (Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries)	Pharmaceuticals ³⁹⁶ (Health)	
	Working Group on Investment (Economic, Trade and Investment)	ASEAN-Japan Young Leaders Workshop (Health, Labor and Welfare)	ASEAN-India Working Group on Agriculture ³⁹⁷ (Agriculture, Fishery and Forestry)	
		AMEICC Working Group on Human Resource Development (Health, Labor and Welfare)	ASEAN-India Tourism Consultations ³⁹⁸ (Tourism)	
		ASEAN-Japan High Level Officials Meeting on Caring Societies (Health, Labor and Welfare)		

396. In the pipeline.

397. In the pipeline.

398. In the pipeline - similar to the ASEAN-India Tourism Ministers Meeting.

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